

THE ANCIENT EAST
AND ITS STORY



"IS NOT THIS GREAT BABYLON THAT I HAVE BUILT?"

THE ANCIENT EAST AND ITS STORY

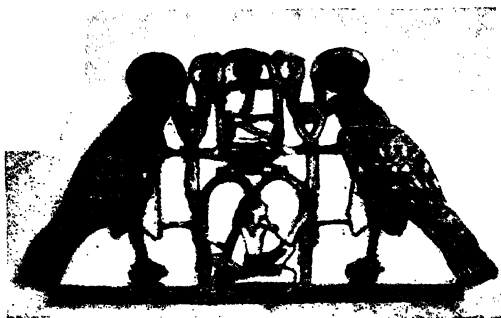
BY

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"THE SEA-KINGS OF CRETE," "THE AMARNA AGE,"

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PREFACE

IN the chapters which follow I have tried to tell, as simply as possible, the story of what the late Sir Gaston Maspero has called "The Classic East." It has nothing to do, save for a moment at its very conclusion, with the lands or peoples that we call Classic—Greece and Rome—but is concerned with lands and nations which were great and famous long before Greece and Rome were dreamt of, and which saw the earliest dawn of human civilization in the world. The main figures in the long drama which is played out before us are, first of all, Egypt and Babylonia, and then, somewhat later, Assyria; while here and there the "Kings of the Hittites," the strange story of whose rapid rise and equally rapid fall cannot yet be told in full, intervene to trouble the arrangements and thwart the plans of their older neighbours. Little Palestine, the bridge between the great empires, plays but a humble and subordinate part on the stage, for her story must be told from a totally different point of view if justice is to be done to her work for the world.

The story begins away back in the mists of the dawn, when man was just beginning to emerge from the night of the Stone Ages; and it tells of the strangely varied fortunes of the great old nations which built up the earliest civilization of the world, down to the point where Egypt, the last tottering pillar of the splendid building, crashed into ruin at the battle of Pelusium, and the new forces, Greece and Persia, which were to fight for the dominion of the Ancient World, faced one another over the carcasses of the old empires. Into the fabric of the story are woven threads of the ancient legends of the nations, sacred and secular, snatches of their heroic traditions, and here and there a native picture, dating, it may be, from the time of Abraham or of the Israelite Judges, which lets us see the life of the time as it appeared to the men who were living it.

There has been so much to tell that I have not found it possible to write of the Kings of the House of Minos, who were building up a great sea-empire in Crete and on the Mediterranean shores and islands while Egypt and her rivals were striving for supremacy on land; or of the "strong men before Agamemnon" who succeeded to the

inheritance of Minos, and built their noble palaces in "Greece-before-the-Greeks"; but it may be that the future will afford a chance of repairing the omission.

The illustrations in colour have been carefully studied as to the correctness of the ancient details to which they endeavour to give life, while those in black and white have been chosen so as to represent, as far as possible, the different stages of the long development which they illustrate, and to include characteristic examples of the results of the latest discoveries.

JAMES BAIKIE.

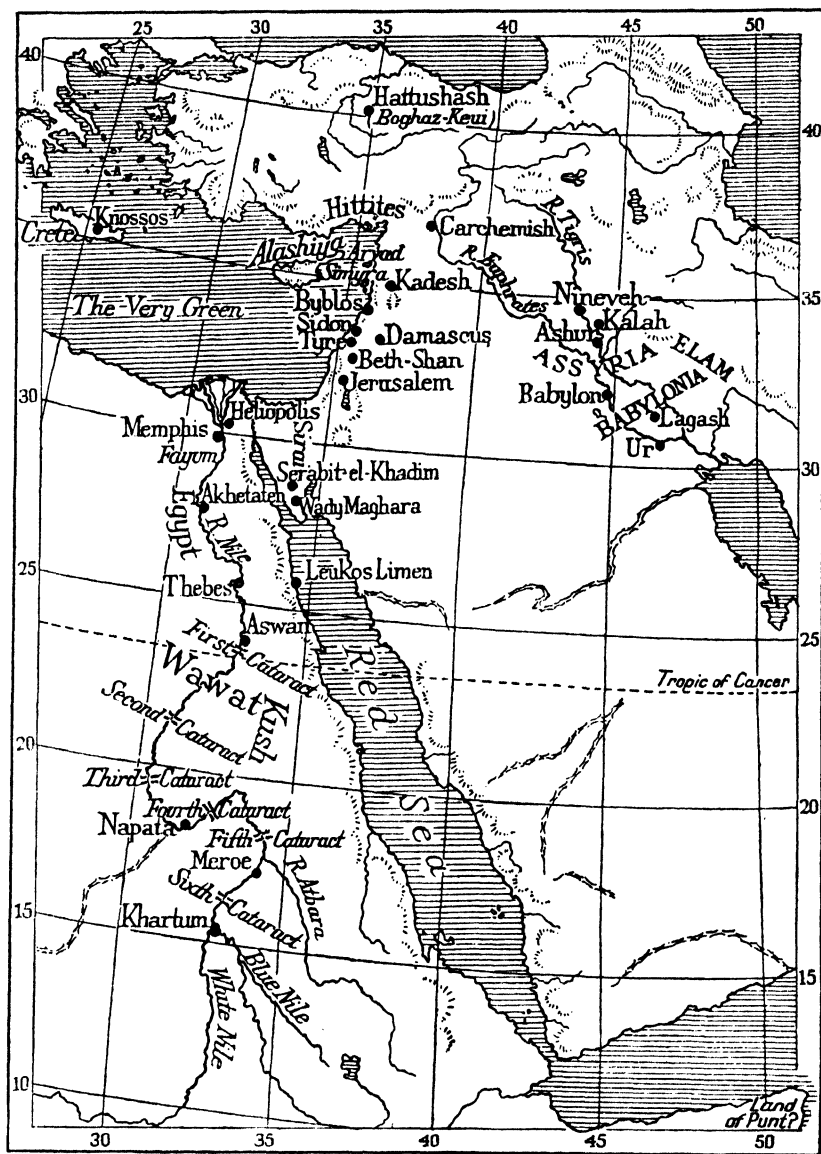
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THE ANCIENT EAST.

THE ANCIENT EAST AND ITS STORY

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

“ONCE upon a time”—somewhere about 3,400 years ago—one of the greatest Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, Thothmes III., was leading his army far away up in northern Syria, beyond Mount Lebanon, near to the great bend where the Euphrates makes up its mind not to flow to the Mediterranean, and turns eastwards to run by mighty Babylon and Ur of the Chaldees to the Persian Gulf. Thothmes was a great soldier, the greatest that Egypt ever bred, and the whole of the Ancient East trembled at the shaking of his spear. He had captured Kadesh, the city of his most stubborn enemy; he had captured Carchemish, the city which kept the bridge-head of the Euphrates crossing; and he had crossed the big river and set up a great stone pillar on the eastern side, telling of what he had done. All the princes and kings of the country round about were hurrying to be the first to come into the victor’s camp, with costly gifts of gold and ivory and lapis lazuli, and to “smell the ground” before the famous soldier.

While he was waiting for them all to come in with their tribute, King Thothmes, to pass the time, got up a great elephant hunt. There were plenty of elephants in the neighbourhood, and His Majesty had fine sport, for his huntsmen rounded up a herd of 120. You can imagine that it was rather a risky business to stand up to a charging elephant with nothing but bow and spear; and at one stage of the hunt Thothmes came pretty near to ending all his campaigns very suddenly. The biggest tusker of the herd charged down upon the king; but just in the nick of time one of his captains, called Amen-emhab, rushed between his master and the monster, and with one slash of his sword cut off the elephant’s trunk. The infuriated beast

turned upon its new assailant, and Amenemhab ran for his life to the river. He plunged into the water between two rocks, where the elephant could not get at him, and so both the king and his deliverer were saved. Thothmes gave his plucky servant "The Gold-of-Valour," which corresponded to our Victoria Cross, and "three changes of raiment," which sounds just like a bit out of the Bible. Captain Amenemhab himself has left us the story of the hunt, and of his other adventures in the Syrian wars, carved on the walls of his tomb at Thebes, in Upper Egypt.

Somewhere about sixty years later, the great-grandson of King Thothmes paid some visits to the same neighbourhood. Amenhotep III. was not a great soldier, like his famous ancestor. He was rather "El Dorado," the Golden Emperor of the East, to whom all his brother kings did homage, because Egypt was the wealthiest land in all the world. But he was also a famous big-game hunter—"a mighty hunter before the Lord," like Nimrod. He had killed in two days' hunting 75 wild bulls out of a herd of 170 that his huntsmen had rounded up in the Delta of his own land; but now he was looking for more exciting sport. So, when he was visiting his outposts of empire in northern Syria, he went lion-hunting, just as King Edward VII. hunted tigers in India when he went there as Prince of Wales. He, too, has left us the account of his bag, and this is how it reads: "Reckoning of lions brought by His Majesty in his shooting by himself, beginning in the first year up to the tenth year, lions, terrible, 102." Quite business-like, you see, and the young sportsman was not much more than into his teens when the record began.

Three hundred years later a famous Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser I., tells us about his big-game hunting in much the same country as that where Thothmes and Amenhotep had bagged their elephants and lions. The Assyrian king was either a much greater hunter than the two Pharaohs, or else he had a less sensitive conscience, and could stretch the truth a little further than they could; anyhow he makes a wonderful tale of his prowess on the hunting-field. Here is his story: "Under the auspices of Ninurta, my patron (god), I killed 120 lions in my youthful ardour, in the fullness of my manly might on my own feet, and 800 lions I killed from my own chariot." A record like this makes Gordon Cumming and Selous look very small indeed—all the more when you remember that it was all done with bow and arrow, instead of with rifles. Perhaps it may even make you think that the Assyrian king, at all events, was drawing the long-bow in his narrative with an even stronger hand than in the actual hunt. All the same,

here are records of big-game hunting which show us that only 3,000 years ago, or even less, elephants and lions were absolutely swarming in lands which were among the earliest lands in all the world to be civilized. Nowadays you would almost as soon expect to see a rhinoceros walking down the Strand as to see an elephant in Syria ; yet only a little more than thirty centuries ago an Egyptian Pharaoh could see there a sight that can only be seen to-day by a very lucky sportsman in the heart of Africa, if even there—a herd of 120 elephants.

Now that is just the reason why I have told you these old stories of big-game hunting in the days of the Pharaohs and the kings of Assyria—to help you to understand how short a time it is since man has had any real mastery over the world of which he is now the unquestioned master. Three thousand years seems a very long time to us ; and so it is when we look at it as a part of the time in which we have written history of his doings. It is about half the whole length of the story. But these thirty centuries are little more than a drop in the bucket when we compare them with the tens, perhaps with the hundreds of thousands of years during which men were living on the world before they became civilized enough to have any written story of how they lived and what they did ; and during those countless years it was only gradually that they climbed high enough to be the royal and successful hunters whom we have been watching. Six thousand years back you would still find men hunting the great wild beasts, but with far less confidence and success, and far more frequent disasters ; double the number again, and you would find them perhaps as often the hunted as the hunters ; double it once more, and you would perhaps be coming to a time when they dared not attack the greater wild creatures of whom they went in terror, but could only face and slay the lesser animals.

Of these far-back days, when the men of the Old Stone Age began the conquest of the world and the lower creation, I am not going to try to tell you, for the story of the Ancient East, from the time when we have got actual records of the work and the lives of men, is quite long and full enough to need all the space that we can give it. But we must know something, at least, of the men who came just before the time when the great nations and kingdoms of the East, with their cities and their written records, began to grow up, and to take the place of the wandering tribes of half-civilized folk who fought for the possession of the countries where history was to begin, with the great wild beasts whose descendants we have seen the Pharaohs and the Assyrian kings killing off. Fortunately, one of the lands of the

Ancient East, the wonderful valley that makes the Land of Egypt, has preserved enough of their traces to let us see something of what they were and how they lived. But before we look at the last men of the New Stone Age before the beginning of history—the men who began to use a metal, copper, side by side with their stone tools and weapons, we shall have to glance for a little at the lands in which they lived—those lands where the dawn of civilization first began to break upon the darkness of barbarism.

CHAPTER II

THE TWO GREAT RIVER-LANDS, AND THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THEM

FAR away in the very heart of equatorial Africa, a little south of the Equator, there rises one of the greatest and most famous rivers of the world. The beginnings of the Nile are in one of the remotest and least civilized bits of the earth's surface, and the greater part of its course lies either through equatorial swamps or through barren deserts ; but before it has finished its long journey of 4,000 miles, and reached the Mediterranean, it has travelled through the greatest kingdom of the ancient world, and its broad stream has reflected the towers and colonnades of vast temples which mark the spots where once stood the proudest cities of a great empire. For thousands of years its waters bore upon their bosom the gilded barges of famous kings and of mighty gods, while the ships of all nations, from Crete, from Tyre, from Sidon and Byblos, even at last from far-off Athens and the Islands of the Ægean, swept up the stream before the strong north wind to unload at the quays of Memphis or of Thebes ; and drifted down again with the current, laden with all the fine and beautiful things which the cunning workmen of Egypt knew so well how to make.

But the Nile was not only the witness of the splendour of Ancient Egypt, not even only a helper in the making of it : it actually made the whole land in the beginning, and it kept on remaking it year by year, and is remaking it still. For a long way after the start of its journey it runs, as I have said, through great swamps, where its current is almost choked by huge masses of matted reeds (the " sudd "), which have to be cut through periodically to clear a channel. Then it comes out at last into more open country, which is barren and desolate on either bank ; and just at Khartum another great river, the Blue Nile, comes rolling down from the hills of Abyssinia to join the slower current of the longer stream, the White Nile, as the equatorial river is called. The united stream flows on past the battlefield of Omdurman, where the last hope of the Dervishes was shattered to pieces. It passes the first of the six great steps, the Cataracts, down which it has to fall before it reaches Egypt, and gliding past the ruins



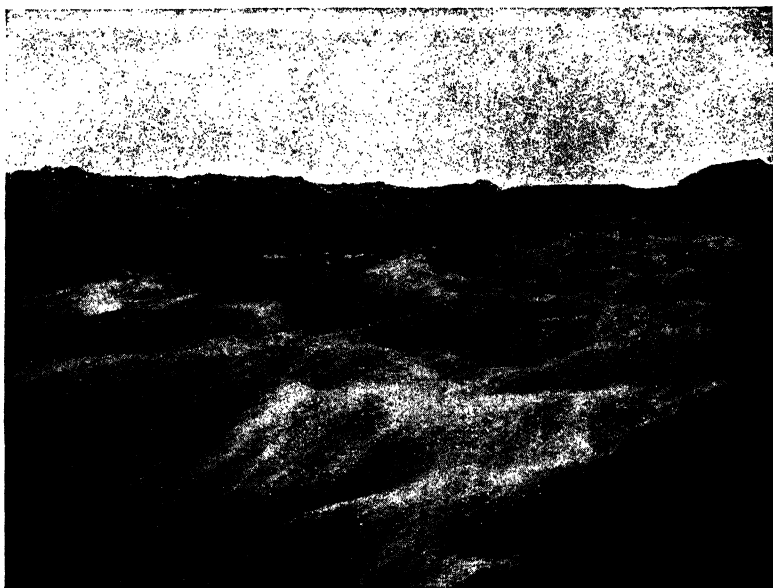
THE NILE, WITH A SAILING TOURIST BOAT.
Libyan Mountains in background.



GREAT TEMPLE OF ABU SIMBEL, NUBIA.
Hewn out of the solid rock.

of what was once the famous city of Meroë, it reaches the point where another mountain torrent from the Abyssinian hills comes flowing in from the east to join it. This is the Atbara, and on its banks Lord Kitchener and his army fought the battle which prepared the way for the advance to Omdurman. The Atbara is the last river which joins the Nile, and from this point the great river rolls on, receiving nothing from the country through which it passes, though it gives so much.

Now comes step after step of the great stair of the Cataracts—the Fifth, the Fourth, the Third, the Second. They are not really waterfalls, as their name might suggest, but rather long sloping rapids, down which the river rushes among rocks which make the passage both difficult and dangerous. Soon after you have passed the Second, you see on your left hand a wonderful sight. A great sandstone promontory jutting out into the river has been carved into a huge temple, in front of whose door four mighty figures of the Pharaoh who did the work sit with hands on knees, eternally looking down upon the shining



PART OF THE FIRST CATARACT OF THE NILE AT ASWAN.

stream and the little creatures of a day who come and go on their little errands, and pass away and are forgotten. For more than 3,000 years they have sat there, and have seen so many changes ; how many more will they see in the ages still to come ?

You are drifting now through a narrow valley, with barrenness on either hand of you. The valley is bordered by savage hills of naked rock, and if you could climb to the top of either ridge, you would see nothing but barrenness as far as your eye can reach. It is a very Valley of the Shadow of Death. By and by, however, the river widens out, and in the distance you see the towers of temples, and the graceful fans of tall palm trees. Soon you are passing the beautiful island of Philæ, and then comes the roar and foam of the First Cataract, the last of the Nile's six stairs, where the great river breaks through the granite rocks which bar its path into Egypt. All this is changed now, since the building of the great dam at Aswan has made the river above it into a big lake, beneath whose waters the temples and palm trees of Philæ are submerged ; but I have told you of it as it was

before its beauty had to be sacrificed for the sake of the millions whose lives depend on the water of the river.

Here, then, Egypt really begins, and from Aswan to the sea the Nile flows through its narrow valley—never more than 30 miles wide, sometimes only 1 mile from cliff wall to cliff wall, generally from 5 to 15 miles in breadth. The hills on either side are as barren as ever, and if you climbed them you would still see nothing but desert sands stretching away to the horizon; but on either side of the river lies now a flat ribbon of soil, green, yellow, or brown, according to the season of the year, but always either being prepared for a crop, or waving with the richest harvests that you will find anywhere in the world. The soil of the flat ribbon is deep, rich, black earth. It ends at the desert edge so suddenly that you can stand with one foot in rich herbage and the other in barren sand; and it is so fertile that the farmer can get three or four crops off it every year. No other land in the world would stand that for long without getting exhausted; but the Egyptian peasant has been doing it for thousands of years, and there seems to be no reason why he should not go on doing it for thousands more.

Of course the reason of this change from desert into garden is all just in one word—the Inundation. If it were not for the Nile and its yearly flood, the narrow valley, which is the real Egypt, would be just as barren as the rest of the land; but every year the river, as it overflows its banks and spreads out over the flat land on either side, leaves behind it a fresh layer of soil whose presence makes all the difference. Each spring the White Nile, already swollen by the rains in equatorial Africa, is joined and held up at Khartum by the flooded stream of the Blue Nile, which is bringing down, after the rains on the Abyssinian hills, great quantities of soil in its muddy waters. Farther north, the Atbara brings in another contribution, and the flood, which began to rise at Khartum by the middle of May, reaches Aswan by the beginning of June. The inundation reaches Cairo generally between the 17th and the 20th of June, and attains its full height in September. For a while the whole of the flat land is under water, and when the river falls again it has left behind it a thin layer of the soil that it was carrying with it. Of course there are many parts of the valley to which the flood does not reach, and to help these a system of canals exists which brings the water near enough for each farmer to be able to water his own fields with the precious flood. This is done either by means of a water-wheel turned by bullocks, or by a curious little crane made of a long pole fastened to a cross-beam. At one end of the pole

hangs a bucket, and at the other is a weight consisting of a big lump of Nile mud. The farmer hauls the bucket down till it dips in the water, and then the weight of the lump of mud swings it up so that it can be emptied out over the ground, or into a higher channel. For thousands of years this old crane has been in use, and in the old Egyptian pictures you will see the peasants swinging away at the *shaduf*, as it is called, just as they do to-day.

Thus, you see, the Nile has really made Egypt, and goes on making it afresh every year, as it has done for untold hundreds of years. All the black soil which fills the flat valley has been laid down by the river in the course of ages, and it is refreshed and kept fruitful year by year by the same flood which made it in the beginning. And it is the black soil that is Egypt. The Egyptians themselves, in ancient days, used to call Egypt "The Black Land," to distinguish it from the red deserts which lay on either hand; and seeing how much the Nile did for them, we can scarcely wonder that they made the great river into one of their gods, whose picture or statue was everywhere throughout the land. "Hapi," they called him, and pictured him as a fat and comfortable man, standing among water-plants.

They had a very pretty idea by which they explained the annual flood of the Nile. Of course, in those far-off days, they did not understand where the Nile came from, or how the inundation was produced; in fact, it is not so very long since we ourselves found out the sources of the great river. They believed that the Nile rose out of the earth at the First Cataract; and as for the inundation, it came about in this way. Their great god Osiris, of whom we shall hear more later, had been killed, so they believed, by an enemy, and his wife Isis had gone through the land looking for his dead body and weeping for him. It was her tears that caused the flood of the Nile. Once a year, they believed, in the night between the 17th and 18th of June, a drop of the goddess's tears fell into the river, and whenever that happened, the flood came. To this day some of the Egyptian people keep to the old tradition, though they have long forgotten its first meaning, and the night when the flood first reaches Cairo is marked by a festival, and is called *Lelat-el-Nukta*—"The Night of the Drop," just as the ancient Egyptians used to call it when Moses was a boy growing up in the Egyptian palace.

A little north of Cairo there comes a change. Instead of the narrow valley you have a wide, flat plain, which stretches out on every side as far as you can see, and is everywhere made of the same black soil, and is covered with rich crops. This is the Delta, a fan-shaped



WATER-WHEEL DRIVEN BY BULLOCK POWER TO RAISE NILE WATER TO THE LEVEL OF THE FIELDS.

tract of country, which gets its name because it is a great triangle shaped like the Greek capital letter Δ , which is called Delta. Long, long ago, how many thousand years ago nobody knows, there was no Delta. Instead there was a great bay of the Mediterranean, which came almost as far inland as where Cairo now stands, so that Egypt was nothing but the valley. But the Nile even then was doing what it is still doing, and gradually, as year by year it brought down fresh soil from the far-off Abyssinian hills, it pushed the sea back, until at last it built up this great triangle of rich black loam, 60 or 80 feet deep, through which it now makes its slow way (what is left of it after the farmers have used it) to the sea.

Egypt, then, the first of the lands of our story, is simply the ribbon of fertile land which lies on either side of the great river which has created it, and the broad triangle which lies between the end of the ribbon and the Mediterranean. Or, if you like it better, we might say that Egypt is like a lily, whose long stem, rather crooked in places, is the Nile, and whose broad bloom is the Delta. But though the red land, the desert on either side of the valley, was of no use to the Egyptians for living upon, they found another use for it, of which we shall hear more as we go on; and indeed we should know comparatively little about them had it not been for the use they made of the desert, and the wonderful things that they stored away there with the bodies of their dead friends.

In spite of its length, Egypt is quite a small country. If you look at a map of the land it seems pretty big, and indeed if you take in all that is inside the boundaries of the Egypt on the map you have an area of about 400,000 square miles. Now England, Scotland, and Wales together measure about 90,000 square miles, so that on the map Egypt is between four and five times as big as we are. But then only about a fortieth part of Egypt is land that you can live on or cultivate; 390,000 out of the 400,000 square miles are wilderness—either savage rocky hills or barren sand. Only the odd 10,000 square miles are fit for men living in—just the narrow strip of the valley of the Nile, and the fan of the Delta. So that the real Egypt is just about a ninth part as big as Great Britain—a little bigger than Wales, and a little smaller than Belgium. But because the little strip of land, though so small, was also so rich, there has always been a great number of people in it. Even in the days of the Pharaohs there may have been about seven millions of folk in this little country, and there are far more now. Indeed, there never has been a country in the world where people have been packed so closely as they have



THE SHADUF.

The old weighted lever for raising water, used in Egypt for more than 5,000 years.

been for ages along the banks of the Nile from the First Cataract to the Mediterranean.

The other great country that we have to think of in our story is also, like Egypt, a river land, and a good part of it, like Egypt, was made by its rivers ; but it is a very different country from the land of the Nile. If you look at a map of Asia Minor, you will see that all the eastern end, where Asia Minor joins on to Asia, is a great tangle of wild mountains. High up among these mountains there rises a river which was, for a time, almost as famous as the Nile—"the great river, the river Euphrates," as the Bible calls it. For a while it runs among the mountains westwards, and then turns to the south-west as if it were going to break through the hills to the Mediterranean. As it runs south, it makes a sharp bend for a little towards the east, and comes quite close to a little lake among the hills from which flows another river which is going to be its companion, and to unite with it in the end. But meanwhile the Euphrates turns south-westwards again, and leaves the Tigris to find its own way towards the Persian Gulf. After a time the river breaks out from the last of the hills into the high plains of northern Syria, where we saw the two Egyptian Pharaohs hunting elephants and lions. And then, instead of flowing to the western sea, it makes a great sweep round to south-east and begins to flow in the same direction as the Tigris, which it left away up among the hills. The two rivers are still far apart, but they gradually draw nearer to one another, until they come quite close not far from where Bagdad stands to-day. Between them, from the place where they left the mountains to the place where they almost meet, they enclose a great triangle of high land, gradually sloping down in the direction of the rivers' flow. For ages this triangle has been known as "The Land-between-the-Rivers." The Greek name for it is the one by which it is best known—"Mesopotamia."

Beyond the narrow neck where the two rivers almost meet, the character of the country gradually changes. Mesopotamia was largely upland, but now we come into a country which, like Egypt, has been built up by the rivers themselves out of the soil which they carry down from the mountains in their annual floods. The rivers draw apart from one another again, and enclose a long oval stretch of country which, like the Delta of the Nile, has been growing for thousands of years, and pushing back the sea before the advance of the land. Year by year the Persian Gulf, which once came far inland, is being thrust a few feet farther back ; and some of the old cities, which once stood by the seashore, are now miles from it. Finally the two rivers, the



PALMS AND MUD.
A glimpse of a Nile village.

swift-rushing Tigris and the sluggish, slow-flowing Euphrates, join their waters, and, as the *Shatt-el-Arab*, flow together to the sea, past Basra, the old port of Sindbad the sailor, and Mohammerah. The lower part of the land, from below Bagdad to the sea, is called Babylonia, from its most famous city, "great Babylon."

Now these two lands, Mesopotamia and Babylonia, are very different from each other. Mesopotamia is a wide, high-lying, rolling country, the upper part of it partly steppe or prairie country, bright with flowers in spring, but apt to be bleak and barren, the lower fertile enough if well cultivated. The two rivers run for long stretches in channels which they have cut deep below the level of the land ; and so the water which the floods bring down, and without which the country would be desert, had to be held up by dams, and then distributed by canals over the countryside. Babylonia, on the other hand, is flat and low-lying, and the rivers, whose beds are always rising as they bring down fresh soil, were often above the level of the surrounding country. So the Babylonians, too, had to have their canals, though for exactly the opposite reason from their neighbours, the Mesopotamians, and had to draw off the surplus water of the floods by a vast canal system, the remains of whose great banks still stretch in high ridges across the flat plain. If they did not attend to their canals, then the water spread out over the country and stayed there, and instead of bringing fertility, it turned great areas into unhealthy swamps.

For centuries, under Turkish misrule, these two ancient lands have been allowed to go to wreck and ruin. The banks of the canals were neglected, so that the precious water was lost, in Mesopotamia, and in Babylonia was worse than lost, because it was allowed to make the land into marsh ; and for long both Mesopotamia and Babylonia were just about as miserable and uninviting countries as you could imagine. Yet Babylonia was once the garden of the ancient world, and even rivalled Egypt in richness. I daresay you have heard the story of the British soldier who was told, when he was campaigning in Babylonia during the Great War, that this was the place where the Garden of Eden used to be. He looked around at the miserable scene, half-desert, half-swamp. "Well," he said, "I guess it wouldn't take no angel with no flaming sword to keep me out of it." But things were very different in the old days when Babylon was the greatest city in the world, and when its kings took as great a pride in being able to say that they had dug a new canal as in winning a great victory.

About 2,400 years ago a famous Greek writer visited Babylonia, and

wrote about what he saw there. Some of the things he tells us you can see to-day just as he saw them so long ago. For instance, he says that one of the most wonderful things he saw was that the Babylonian boats were circular, and made of leather stretched over willow ribs ; and to-day you can see the round *gufas*, as they are called, floating down the river, just as Herodotus saw them. But the thing that above everything else excited his wonder was the extraordinary richness of the harvests. The land, he said, was not good for growing trees, neither the fig, nor the vine, nor the olive ; but when it came to growing corn there was no country like it, for quite an ordinary crop was two hundredfold, and a really good crop three hundredfold. As to the height to which other crops such as millet and sesamum grew, he says he does not dare to tell it, because people would think that he was telling lies. So you see how much even the richest land in the world depends on a good government, and how, when it is neglected, it goes back to desert or to unhealthy swamp.

Now these two great river-lands, Egypt with its bountiful Nile and Babylonia and Mesopotamia with the Euphrates and Tigris, are the lands with which our story will have mainly to deal. For it was in them that men, as soon as they began to realize the new powers which were given them by the possession of tools and weapons, and especially of tools and weapons of metal, began to gather together into villages, towns, and cities, and to form kingdoms under settled governments ; and in them that they first began to learn how to put into writing the story of what they had done, what they wished, and what they thought. If you will think of it, you will see that there was a reason for these river-lands being the first countries where these things happened. Here you had these great rivers flowing through these countries, and regularly flooding them. Men soon learned that if they could take the floods in hand, so to speak, and guide and control them, letting the precious water out over the thirsty land, as long as it was needed, and keeping it off where and when it was not needed, then the flooded rivers were the greatest blessings that the land could have, bringing life and wealth wherever they came. But, on the other hand, if they could not do this, and the waters of the inundations were allowed to rush over the land at will, and to stay there too long, then the land would be spoiled for any useful purpose, just as much of Babylonia still is.

It was quite useless for each farmer, or even each little group of farmers, to think that they could take the river in hand just at their own little bit of ground and make it serve their purpose. They might

build banks and cut canals to control the water, but if their neighbours farther up the stream had not done their part all the work would go for nothing. So, bit by bit, a whole district would gather together and band themselves under one strong or skilful leader to carry out the management of the river and its floods, not piecemeal, but on a single plan. Gradually this method of working all together spread over the whole country, until it was no longer a district that was organized for the work, but the whole nation, under one leader, who planned the whole arrangement. And the people who had to work at great building schemes to bridle and direct the rivers, and to obey the commands of a single skilful engineer, became clever and patient workmen, who knew how to make the best out of their tools and materials, and were disciplined to act together when the need came. The rivers could be made the very best of servants, if people took them the right way; but they would make the worst of masters if they were left to do as they chose. Necessity is the surest of all teachers, and you never learn so quickly as when you know that you must. The rivers came to the peoples of their lands with rich gifts in one hand, and with destruction and death in the other, and said to them: Which will you have? Learn to use me, and live; neglect me, and die. We need not wonder that folks who had that kind of choice put before them chose to learn, and to learn quickly, and became the leaders of all the world in all that required quick brains and clever hands.

Here, then, were these two great lands, each with its race of strong and clever workers, one in Africa, one in Asia. There was a great distance between them, and a good deal of it was pathless desert, which was very difficult to cross. But the folks of the Old World were just as inquisitive as folks are now, and as eager to find out things that would make them richer or stronger or more comfortable. So even in those early days it was not long before brave men were risking all the dangers and difficulties of the journey between the Euphrates and the Nile, to carry down to Egypt such things of theirs as they hoped the Egyptians might want, and to bring up from Egypt such Egyptian work as was wanted in their own country. For many centuries there was a constant tide flowing and reflowing between the Land of the Nile and the Land-between-the-Rivers. Sometimes the lands were friends, and then it was a peaceful tide which carried long trains of caravans laden with all the treasures of the East or the South across the desert. Sometimes they were enemies, and then the caravans stopped, and their place was taken by armies who tramped wearily across the burning sands to meet and fight one another, perhaps up in

Syria, between the Euphrates and the sea, or perhaps away down at Suez, on the frontier of Egypt, or midway between, in Palestine. But whether it was peace or war, the caravans and the armies all had to travel by the one road, and pass on their errands across the one bridge—the narrow land-bridge that led from Asia into Africa and ended in what we call to-day the Isthmus of Suez.

And because of that, this narrow little strip of land by which the peoples of the two great river-lands passed back and forward on their errands of peace or war became one of the most important countries in the Old World—far more important than any country of the same size would have been anywhere else. Nearly all the land between Egypt and Babylonia is almost impassable for any large company of men, because there is no water and nothing to live on, except what you can carry with you. So the caravans and the armies used to follow the Euphrates up to the great bend where it turns away from the Mediterranean, then they struck southwards through the mountain passes between the two great ranges of the Lebanon, down past the Sea of Galilee, and across the Plain of Esdraelon, and through the pass over Mount Carmel to the little strip of flat land between the hills of Palestine and the sea. They had to face the desert at last, when they had passed the Maritime Plain, as it was called ; but the desert journey was far shorter by this way than by any other.

So you see that the folk who lived in this tiny little strip of hill country and coast-plain that we call Palestine held, as it were, the key of the bridge-head between the greatest and richest lands of the ancient world. Palestine was never either a great or a rich country. The plain by the sea was rich, when it was not wasted by war. Some of the valleys among the hills were beautiful and fertile ; but the most of the land was rough hill-country, where the limestone rock was never far below the ground, and where there were more stones than good soil in the fields. Yet it was precious because the great empires could not get at one another, either to trade or to fight, without using it. So Egypt could not afford to see it in the hands of Babylonia or Assyria, and they could not afford to see it in the hands of Egypt ; and there has been more fighting about that narrow bridge between Asia and Africa, and more brave blood shed for it and on it, than for any other country in the world.

Of course all this made Palestine a very uncomfortable country to live in. Its people, whether they were the Hebrews or the folk who lived in the land before the Hebrews came, were never strong enough to bar the way to the great kingdoms on either side of them,

and to say: "You can settle your quarrels elsewhere; this is our country, and there is no road this way for your armies;" for they were only a handful compared with either the Egyptians or their rivals. So the people of Palestine were always being bullied by one or other of the great powers, and were always living in terror either of Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylon. For a little while, under David and Solomon, they held up their heads and made a bid for freedom; but when they quarrelled among themselves even that hope failed, and the old uncertainty came back again. The Bible tells us that the poor Israelites were like "a silly dove," fluttering about its nest between dangers on either side, flying first one way and then another, and in despair as to where to turn for safety. Yet out of that vexed and harried little country, that seemed to lie at the mercy of its greater neighbours, came the greatest leaders and the greatest teachers about God that the ancient world ever produced. Perhaps it was just because they had found life so difficult that they grew to be so great.

This, then, is the stage where the story of the ancient world is to be played out before us—the Land of the Nile on the south, the Lands-between-the-Rivers on the north-east, and between them the bridge of Palestine. Other folk will come into the picture too—rough Hittite soldiers from the mountains of Asia Minor, Philistines from the isles of the sea, and the like; but the main part of the play is played out among the lands and by the peoples of whom you have been hearing.

CHAPTER III

DAWN IN THE NILE VALLEY

WHEN we try to think of how men lived in the ancient world in these countries which I have been trying to describe, we have to understand that they were very different from what they are now. For instance, during the long night of darkness that we call the Old Stone Age, which lasted for tens of thousands of years—how many no man can tell—there was for a long time no Nile valley like that which we know to-day. Instead of it, there was a long line of narrow lakes filling up the space between the hills which lie now on either side of the Nile. They were fed by the great river which ran slowly through them, so that they were strung out along its course like beads on a thread, while from the hills on each side, which are now dry and desolate, swift torrents rushed down, cutting deep channels in the hillsides, and bringing down tons upon tons of gravel and silt to the lower levels. Where the Delta now is there was nothing but a great bay of the Mediterranean, into which the river poured its waters and the soil which they carried. Nobody could live in the valley, for it was nothing but lake and marsh, in which great herds of hippopotami splashed, and countless crocodiles lurked. The Stone Age men lived and hunted up on the tops of the hills, and over the great desert plateau that now stretches away to the Sahara on the west, and to the Arabian mountains by the Red Sea on the east ; and you can still trace their presence, and know what a lot of them there must have been, by the stone tools and weapons which they have left behind them, and which are found everywhere to-day lying on the desert sands or among the gravel by the sides of the beds of the old torrents.

Then, bit by bit, the face of the land began to change—very slowly, and with long stops between the changes, but always in the one direction. As the Nile and the hill torrents brought down more soil and gravel, the lakes began to get filled up and to disappear, and the sea began to be pushed back. At last all the lakes had vanished, though there were still swamps where the largest of them had been ; and the whole

country was covered with beds of gravel, through which the Nile cut a great trench as it ran towards the sea. Every year, when the flood came in late spring, the river spread out over the land, and left a thin layer of soil over it, and so began to prepare it for men to live upon. And the men were not long in coming. We cannot tell how long it took them to creep down from the hill-tops to the river-banks—thousands of years it must have been anyhow, and that is all we can say; but we can trace their coming, for, step by step, as they crept down the hillsides, they have left their flint knives and flint arrow-heads, until at last they crept out upon the level by the river-bank and began to put up their huts of mud and wood there.

They must have been brave men, those who first made the venture of coming down and facing all the unknown dangers of the valley—just as brave as the pioneers who first crossed the American deserts and climbed the Rocky Mountains, or the explorers who threaded their way through the dark forests of Central Africa. No doubt many of them perished in the struggle with the monsters of the swamps, and many more died of the diseases that the marshes always breed; but gradually they began to get the better of the wild creatures on the land, and learned how to keep clear of the crueller wild creatures of the water, and conquered the swamps so that they could find dry and healthy land to live in. Again it must have taken ages to do all this, but as time went on each step took less time than the step before it, and these brave and clever folk (for they were both brave and clever, though they were still half-savage) were helped tremendously in their task by two things, one of them one of the greatest discoveries ever made by man.

The first thing was that during all those dark ages before the valley became fit to live in, the old Egyptian hunters had gradually become the finest makers of stone tools and weapons that the world ever saw. An old Egyptian flint knife is a very wonderful and even a beautiful thing, with the sides of its blade flaked in regular ripples, like the ribs of sand on the beach when the tide has gone back, and its sharp edge all etched with tiny teeth that make it cut like the finest of saws. Because they could do such beautiful and fine work with flint, their stone weapons, even when they had nothing else, were better and more workmanlike, and their war with wild beasts and wild Nature more successful. But the second thing was a still greater help.

It only came to them when the business of creeping down upon the level was getting far on, but once it came it made such a difference

that the whole world was changed for them by it, and they made more progress in a few years than they could have done in a century before. It was the finding of metal, and the learning how to use it. We are proud enough to-day of the wonderful discoveries of our own time ; did you ever think that the two most wonderful discoveries of all were made by what you would call savages, who could neither read nor write, and that if they had not been made none of our wonders of to-day would ever have been possible ? The Greeks knew how priceless the value of fire had been to men, when they told the old story of how Prometheus stole it from the gods, for the man who first found out how to make fire was the greatest discoverer in all the history of the world ; and only second to him was the man who first found out how to work and to use metal. It was only copper that was found out at first, and we who have been accustomed all our days to steel would think copper a very poor thing if we had to use it for knives and chisels or swords and spears ; but even copper made a difference that we can scarcely realize. Presently we shall have to think of how it may have been found out, but in the meantime we have first to think of the men who found it, and how we come to know about them.

It is only a few years ago that we began to find out anything about them, and what we do know has almost all been learned only from the graves where they buried their dead. The poor little flimsy houses of mud and wooden posts in which they lived have almost all been utterly swept away, and we can only tell even what they were made of because in one or two places a few scraps of the mud walls and sockets for the wooden posts have been found. We know that they grew corn and used it for food, for rows of kilns made of pottery, with clay fire-bars round them, have been found, so that we can tell that they dried their corn so as to make it keep better. And that is pretty much all that we could learn from their homes, as to what they did when they were living. But they believed that when a man died he didn't cease to live. He went on living, they thought, only in a different state, in which his friends could not see him any longer ; and he had just much the same needs in the strange new world that he had passed into as he had when he was living with his friends.

So when they buried him they put into the grave along with him all the things that they thought he would like or need in the other world to which he had gone. They gave him weapons to hunt with, or to defend himself with against the enemies he might meet in the spirit land ; they gave him tools, so that he might be able to make things for himself when the things they had given him wore out ;



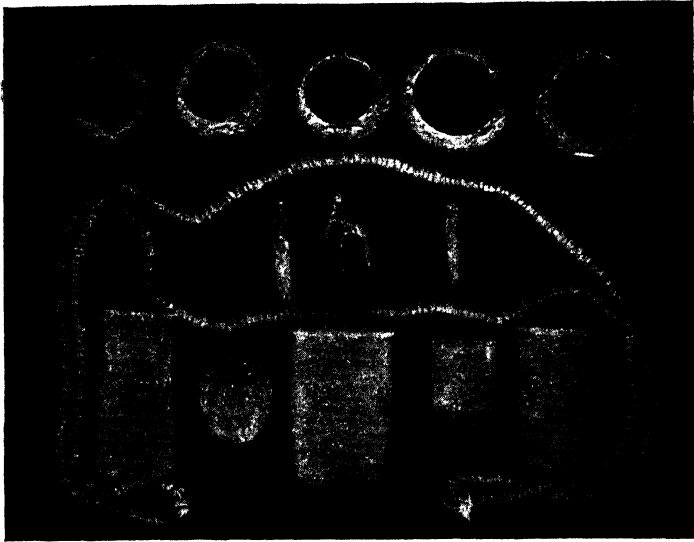
AN EGYPTIAN OF THE DAYS BEFORE HISTORY IN HIS GRAVE.

Note the pots with provision for his journey through the underworld.

(Photo, Egypt Exploration Fund.)

and they gave him pots of all sorts and sizes, with stores of food and drink in them, all carefully sealed up, so that he might never be hungry or thirsty on his long journey. Then they laid him on a beautiful woven mat or a skin, and wrapped it round him, as he lay on his side, with his knees drawn up ; and close by his hand, so that he could get it easily, they laid a little leather bag, with a piece of green stone called malachite in it, and a stone shaped out with a hollow in the middle of it, to grind down the malachite with. And the reason for that was that by grinding down the green stone he could make a kind of paint which he would smear on his face, and under his eyelids. He used to do that when he was living, to protect his eyes against the glare of the desert sands in the sunshine, and they thought that he would need to do the same in the deserts of the other world. If it was a woman who had died, they would place beside her not only the face-paint, but her ornaments—bracelets of flint or ivory, and sometimes, a very precious treasure, a bracelet of copper beads.

You remember that I said that all the soil on which men lived in Egypt was the black soil that had been brought down by the Nile. Now, if these Egyptians of the far-off days had buried their friends



AN EGYPTIAN LADY'S ORNAMENTS IN THE DAYS BEFORE HISTORY.

Bracelets, beads, carved ivory hairpins, etc.

(*Photo, Egypt Exploration Fund.*)

there, we should never have found out about their lives at all in all likelihood, for the river would have hidden their graves many feet deep under its yearly gift of fresh soil. But the black land was far too precious to be used for graves: it was all needed to grow crops to support the living. So the Egyptians, not only in the Late Stone Age, but all down through their history, used to make the graves of their dead friends just beyond the edge where the black land ends and the desert begins. There they weren't so far away but that their living friends could come and make fresh offerings of food for their loved ones' journey, or lay about them the flowers that an Egyptian always loved; and, above all, the dry sand of the desert preserved all the gifts that they had laid in it, far better than the moist black soil ever would. So there, for hundreds and hundreds of years, the rows of graves grew longer and longer on the margin of the desert, and in each one of them was stored a little treasure of all the things that these people of long ago valued, the tools they worked with, the weapons they fought with, the ornaments they wore, the dishes and

vases they used, and the very foods they ate, to tell us what kind of men were the men who lived in Egypt in the days when the Stone Age was passing away and the Age of Copper coming in.

What were they like, then, these earliest Egyptians that we know, or are ever likely to know? Well, they seem to have been not unlike their descendants the Egyptian *fellahin* of to-day. They were middle-sized, rather inclined to be slender, and they were rather supple and tough than brawny and powerful. You would say a quick people, quick-brained, and quick in action. And they must have been astonishingly clever. It is all very well for us at this time of day to enjoy all the things that the ages have brought to us, and to look down patronizingly on the poor folks of bygone days who had so few of the advantages that are everyday things to us; but we ought rather to be thinking, now and again, as we use them, of the cleverness and the skill of the men who first found out to make the commonest things that we use without ever a thought of how they first came into being. Do you remember Robinson Crusoe's story of the making of his first pots to hold his corn and to boil his meat, and the endless trouble he had before he could get the clay into the right shape, and then get it to stand the fire? We all use cups and bowls of all sorts, and never think about the clever brains that first learned how to shape such things, and then how to fire them, so that they would last, and how to glaze them so that they would be smooth and be easily kept clean and look beautiful. These men had to find out all these things for themselves, just as Robinson Crusoe had—only they did it far better than he did, for he says that his pots were clumsy, ugly things, and theirs are beautiful. They had no potter's wheel to shape them on, but, working only by hand and eye, they turned out vases and bowls of the most graceful and beautiful shapes; they had no potter's kilns to fire them in, but they managed their fires so that they could fire a pot with one half of it a deep black and the other half a deep, rich red. Then they found out the secret of how to glaze their pottery, and some of the Egyptian glazes, greens and blues, are as beautiful as anything of the kind that has ever been done.

They were just as skilful with other things. I have told you already how cleverly they worked the hard flint into tools and weapons. After a while they began to ornament their flint knives and daggers, instead of just giving them plain handles. Sometimes they would give the knife a handle of thin beaten gold, for they were already getting gold from the eastern hills or from Central Africa; sometimes they would give it one of carved ivory, for they were getting ivory



EGYPTIAN POTS OF THE DAYS BEFORE HISTORY.

(Photo, Egypt Exploration Fund.)

too from the south, and were using it for all sorts of things. Now it would be for harpoon heads and spear-points that they used it ; again it would be for a woman's bracelets, or for a carved figure of a man or a god. Then they turned to the wild desert hills that bordered their valley on the east, and there they found beautifully coloured stones of many sorts. They were mostly terribly hard—so hard that you would scarcely believe that people could work them, especially when you remember that they had nothing but stone tools, or at best soft copper, to work them with ; but our old Egyptian had infinite patience as well as wonderful skill. He would take a block of one of these beautiful hard stones—red porphyry, or green basalt, or black diorite that is as hard as iron—and he would work away at it with his poor tools until he had shaped it into a lovely bowl or vase, all its rich colours shown up by the polish he had put on it, and its sides ground and cut till they were as thin as a post card and the light shone through them. Later on, when other nations had seen the fine Egyptian bowls of hard stone, they tried to imitate them ; but none was ever quite so successful as the old Egyptian workman in this art that required such patience and such a skilful hand.

How did they first find out copper, and the way to smelt it and fashion it into chisels, spear-heads, and daggers ? Nobody knows exactly how it came about, but one great scholar has pictured how he thinks it happened. You remember that these earliest Egyptians were very fond of using malachite for their face-paint. They got it from the Sinai Peninsula, where in later days they used to go for turquoise as well. Now the Sinai Mountains are rich in copper ore. One day, perhaps, one of the miners who had gone to Sinai for malachite was gathering stones to make up a fireplace for his camp-fire, and

among them were pieces of copper ore. Then the fire was lit, and was kept burning all night to frighten away the wild beasts from the camp. In the morning, when the ashes were cleared away to kindle the new fire for breakfast, lo. and behold ! the copper ore had been smelted by the heat, and there among the ashes lay some glittering beads of copper. Such a thing was sure to happen again and again in such a neighbourhood, and soon the clever Egyptians learned that the stuff which made these pretty red globules, which looked so well when you threaded them and made a bracelet out of them, could be used for more serious purposes. They would soon gather a lot of ore, and smelt it on a bigger scale, and beat a dagger or a chisel out of the red metal ; and once that was done the great discovery was fairly made.

Another famous scholar has told the story in another way. He pictures the miner bringing home his load of malachite, and by some accident his wife drops into the house fire either a lump of it, or some of the green paste which she had made by grinding it down. Next morning, when she rakes out the fireplace, she finds that her precious piece of malachite, or the paste that she took so much trouble to make, has disappeared for ever, but in its place there is twinkling in the bottom of the fireplace a shining bead of copper ! She doesn't take long to see how nice this bright bead will look on the end of a necklace, or as part of an armlet, and when she has persuaded her husband to get more of it for her, he begins to think that he might make a still better use of it. And so copper-making begins.

You can take either way of it that you like, for nobody can tell which is true ; but somehow in that fashion the first discovery of metal was made, and men gradually learned to use it for all sorts of things. It is strange to think that you can still see, in some of these ancient graves in the desert, the very copper beads that were made when men were just beginning to find out how to make copper, and had only got the length of using it for a woman's necklace or bracelet. If you could hold up one of these little beads, dull enough looking now, but once so wonderful, you might see in it, as in a magic mirror, the picture of all that the little bead was going to mean to the world—roaring furnaces and foundries, armourers' shops and knights in plate and mail, the bronze Colleoni sitting his bronze horse for ever in Venice, and the bronze Crucifixion in the cathedral at Padua, great steel-clad battleships on the seven seas, and mighty railway engines snorting across continents. Not one of all these would ever have been but for that discovery of the little copper bead so many thousand years

ago. The man who made that first discovery was no doubt a clever man, but, clever as he was, even he never dreamed for a moment of what his find was going to mean for the world, or what vast forces, of good and of evil, he was setting in motion.

Clever and tasteful as these old folks were, however, they were by no means perfect, and one curious habit that they had is told us from their graves. In some of the graveyards ever so many of the people had the bones of the left forearm broken. Now the Egyptian *fellah* of to-day is very fond of a rough kind of fencing, or rather quarter-staff, with the long stick (*naboot*) which he carries, and it looked as if his far-away forefathers had just been as fond as he of the same thing, and had often got their left arms broken in this rough sport. But then it was found that in some places it was the women who regularly had their left arms broken. I am afraid that the only explanation is that in those rude old days women were not treated as they are now, and that the early Egyptian husband used to take the stick to his wife when dinner was late, or when breakfast was not to his liking. It seems very shocking, but there it is!

In another way, too, they remind us that "the good old days" were not quite so good as we sometimes imagine, and that you and I would think ourselves very badly off if we had to live in such surroundings as they had to face. People sometimes try to tell us that nearly all our sicknesses and troubles are due to our modern ways of living, and that the nearer we get back to the simplicity of the earliest days the healthier we should be. Well, it isn't so, and the graves of these old Egyptians show it plainly. Instead of being healthier than the folk of to-day, their bones tell us that they suffered, and suffered dreadfully, from some diseases, especially from rheumatism. If you think of it, people who had to spend their days in a country that was still half marsh were bound to have such troubles. The old days were very wonderful days in many things, but they must have been very uncomfortable days too, and our old Egyptian would think that he was in heaven if he had a tenth part of the comfort that we have to-day and never give a second thought to.

So these ancient graves of the Nile valley tell us, in faint outline, the story of those old dead days. Sometimes it seems to me a kind of pitiful thing that, after the men of that far-off past have slept peacefully so long, their resting-place should be disturbed now, and their little treasures and their withered bones carried away to be put in a museum show-case. Yet, after all, they are not harmed, and we, if we are wise, may learn from their relics lessons of reverence and

admiration for the past and the great men of the past who first trod the roads by which we travel. And perhaps our earliest Egyptians, if they can understand to-day the real meaning of what we are doing with their cast-off treasures and husks, may see that we are really honouring them and their work.

CHAPTER IV

A PICTURE OF THE WORLD : EGYPTIAN AND BABYLONIAN

ONE of the first things that every people in the world has thought about is the question of how the world itself began, who made it and how, and what it and the sky above it are really like. In the first chapters of the Bible you find the picture of all this which the Hebrews drew for themselves when they began to think about such things, and as we shall see, as we go on, it is in some respects not unlike the picture which their cousins, the Semites of Babylonia, made for themselves—so much so, indeed, as to make us think that both peoples must have been drawing from some earlier source which has been forgotten. So in this chapter we must try to see the world as these old folks, in the dawn of history, saw it, looking out upon it first through the eyes of an old Egyptian, and next through those of a man of Babylonia.

Suppose, then, that you try to see the world as if you were an Egyptian living, let us say, at Memphis, 5,000 years ago. You will believe, to begin with, that the world was made by the great Creator-God Ptah, who lives in the big temple at Memphis, and who carved it out just as a sculptor carves a statue. You know, of course, that your neighbour away down the river, in the Delta at Sais, does not believe this at all. He believes that the world was made by the great goddess Neith, of Sais, who wove it on her loom, like a weaver weaving a piece of cloth. And you may even have heard that, far away up the river, at Elephantiné, almost where you believe that the Nile rises out of the ground, there are people who have another Creator-God, quite different from either yours or the goddess of Sais. His name is Khnum, and their story of creation tells how he took a lump of Nile mud and put it on his potter's wheel, and out of it he made the world-egg. But the difference between your story and those of the man from Sais and the man from Elephantiné does not bother you in the least. Their story may be good for them, and your story is good for you, and you don't try to reconcile them and get rid of the differences between them.

There was another story of the beginning of the world which was framed by the priests of Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, where the sun-god was worshipped, and this came in later days to be one of the most popular ways of accounting for things. In the beginning, the priests of Heliopolis said, there was nothing but a great shapeless body of water, which had within it the seeds of all the life that was to be upon earth. Out of this came the sun-god, Ra, to shine over all things, and within it there lay the earth-god, Geb, and the heaven-goddess, Nut, locked in one another's arms, for as yet earth and heaven were not separated. Then came the god of the air, Shu, and thrust them away from one another, and lifted the heaven-goddess, Nut, into the sky, so that she bends over the earth, with her long slender fingers touching it at two points, and her feet touching it at two more, and her body is sprinkled over with the stars which shine at night. This, you see, is a more elaborate and perhaps a more poetical way of accounting for things; but, even so, it is just the picture that a child might draw for itself.

Well then, supposing that we have got our idea, such as it is, of how the world came into existence, what is it like, now that it is here? The first thing that you have got to remember is that it is a very tiny world. Your Egyptian, wherever in the valley he might live, had no idea whatever of the great continent which lay to the west and the south of him, still less of mighty Asia, stretching away to the east and north, and least of all of Europe, lying away north beyond the Mediterranean. His world was something like a great oblong box, whose length was from south to north, and its breadth from east to west. Down the middle of this box ran the great river Nile, with its ribbon of black soil, on which men lived, on either bank. At the south end of the box the river rose out of the ground with a thundering rush, at the place that people called the First Cataract. It did not run quite to the north end, but about halfway through the box it ran into a great body of water which the Egyptians called the Very Green, and we call the Mediterranean Sea. The Very Green occupied most of the north end of the box, except where it was sprinkled with islands, from which men used to come in ships now and again, trying to trade with Egypt; and at the north-eastern corner there was a long stretch of sandy desert, and then a mountainous land, to which the Pharaoh used to send his ships once in a while to bring home cedar-wood for the gates of his palace or a temple, or to build his own royal barge.

Round all this, which made the bottom of the box, rose the sides of it, which were formed of high mountains. You could see them on

the east and west of the valley ; and if they were not to be seen to the north and south, you believed that they were there. Near the top of the sides of the box there ran a great river, the celestial Nile. You could not actually see it, but you knew that it was there, for in the morning the sun-god appeared, a bright globe of fire, in the east, and all the day long you could see him gliding along, round by the south, to the west, and you knew that he must be sailing in his divine boat along the heavenly river. You couldn't see the boat for the glory of the god in it, but it must have been there, or how else could Ra sail round as he did ? When the heavenly Nile reached the west side of the box, it disappeared behind the mountains, and as the sun-god's barge came to this point it vanished from sight, and for twelve hours there was darkness, while the god was sailing behind the hills through the world of darkness, until he got round to the east again, and emerged from behind the hills.

Over this box-world, with its earthly and its heavenly Nile, there stretched the heavens. They were like a great iron plate overhead, and they were held up at the four corners of the box by four pillars, north, south, east, and west. At first your Egyptian thought that these four pillars were made of forked tree-trunks, just like the four wooden pillars which held up the roof of his own house ; but by and by he came to understand that trees would never be big and strong enough to hold up the sky, and so he imagined that heaven was held up by four great mountain peaks, one at each corner of the box. As for the stars, they were lamps which were hung down from the iron plate by ropes. Perhaps they were always burning, though you only began to see them when the sun-god sailed away behind the hills, and the darkness began to fall ; perhaps they were only lit up at night, and were put out again in the morning.

Of course, when the sun-god was sailing through the dark world of night, he couldn't see how his children on earth were behaving themselves, so he called to him another god, Thoth, the god of the moon, and said to him, " Be thou in heaven in my place, while I give light to the glorified spirits in the underworld. . . . Thou art in my stead—my representative thou shalt be called." So the moon came into the heavens and floated like the sun round the celestial Nile in its bark, when the sun had departed behind the hills to shine upon the dead. But the moon had its enemies, and every month, just when its light was brightest, they robbed it bit by bit of its glory, until they had put out its light altogether. The Egyptian said that it was a sow who tore out the eye of the sun-god's representative, and threw it into the

celestial Nile ; but each new month the baboon rescued it again, and set it in its place in its barge. So every month the moon had fifteen days of growing strength and brightness, and fifteen days of suffering and of waning glory. It died, and was born again, to repeat the same process twelve times in the year, and each of its lives measured a month of the life of the world.

Sometimes it seemed to our Egyptian that something had gone wrong with the four pillars which held up the sky. A terrible storm came on—there weren't very many of them in Egypt, so they seemed all the more terrible when they did come ; or perhaps an earthquake shook his world and tumbled some of his house down upon his head. Then in his simple way he imagined that the sky had fallen off the four pillars, and was coming down. You see it is all as simple and childlike as possible ; just the sort of thing that you could imagine an inquisitive child imagining for himself to account for all the wonderful things that he sees day by day and night by night. Indeed, the Egyptian, with all his cleverness, was very much like a child looking round upon a strange new world in these early days when his thoughts about God and the world first took shape. But he was unlike other peoples in this, that once he had thought anything out he never wished to change his ideas about it. A thought seemed to him a sacred thing just because it was old, and the older it was the more sacred he held it to be. So these earliest child-like stories of the world and the sky always kept their place in Egypt. Men grew more learned as the centuries went on ; they travelled out far farther than the ends of the square box that once made the Egyptian world ; they learned that their Nile went far farther south, or came from far farther south than the First Cataract ; but they still stuck to their old picture of the world, only pushing out its sides a little farther to make room for the new lands that they had come to know. And when they wrote in their beautiful picture-writing the word for heaven, it was still the old iron plate propped up on the four forked trees, and when they wanted to write about a storm they drew the iron plate falling halfway down the props.

Meanwhile, as the Egyptian was forming and sticking to his simple old theory of how the world was made, and what it was like, his neighbour, away to the north-east, in the Land-between-the-Rivers, was making up his story of how it all came about. It was a very much more elaborate story, and very much more skilfully put together ; and we have the great advantage in trying to read it, that, instead of having to piece it together from half a dozen different sources, we have it told in a sort of poem which was written down more than twenty-

five centuries ago. It is written in the curious arrow-headed writing that the Assyrians and Babylonians used, upon tablets of baked clay, which have been found by explorers, and are now lying in the British Museum; and though there are gaps in the poem, where the tablets have been broken or lost, still we can make out the outline of the story pretty clearly.

The Mesopotamian story, like the Egyptian one, begins with the time when there was neither earth nor heaven, but only the great shapeless body of water that we call by the Greek name Chaos. Within this formless deep lay two monsters, one male and one female; and out of it, in the course of ages, the great gods began to emerge. First there came a set of half-gods, and then, one by one, the great gods who were famous all through Babylonian history. But when the female monster of the deep, Tiâmat, saw the gods, and realized that they would in the end be the destruction of her beloved disorder, she rebelled against them, and called up out of the deep a herd of other monsters to help her in her war against the gods and the order which they were bringing. The old poem gives us a wonderful picture of the hideous army which Tiâmat gathered for the struggle, and it will help you to understand the weird power of the legend if I let it tell its own tale of this loathly host:

“Tiâmat, the creator of everything, added
Strong warriors, creating great serpents,
Sharp of tooth, merciless in attack.
With poison, in place of blood, she filled their bodies.
Furious vipers she clothed with terror,
Garnished them with awful splendour, made them high of stature,
That their countenance might inspire terror and arouse horror,
Their bodies puffed out, their attack irresistible.
She set up basilisks, great serpents and monsters,
A huge monster, a mad dog, a scorpion-man,
A raging monster, a fish-man, a great bull,
Carrying merciless weapons, not dreading battle.”

With this army of terrors she advances against the gods. Anshar, the chief of the elder gods, sends first one and then another of his heavenly host against her, but each in turn finds his heart fail him as he sees the horrible creatures that he has to meet, and fairly takes to his heels in terror. A great council of the gods is called in Upshukkinaku, the divine meeting-place, and they all sit drinking sweet wine until they pluck up some courage. At last they choose one of the young gods, Marduk, who is famous as the god of Babylon itself,

to be their champion. Marduk takes his spear and club, and hangs his bow and quiver at his side ; he calls the four winds of heaven to accompany him, and with them the whirlwind, the typhoon, and the hurricane, and thus armed and supported he goes forth to meet Tiāmat and her grisly host.

When the champions of order and disorder meet, they stand for a while hurling reproaches against one another, like the heroes of the Iliad, apparently to screw up their courage to the fighting point. At last the battle is joined, and almost at once Marduk overcomes Tiāmat in a somewhat ludicrous fashion :

“ As Tiāmat opened her mouth to its widest,
He drove in the evil wind, before she could shut her lips.
The terrible winds filled her belly,
And her courage was taken from her, and her mouth she opened wide.
He severed her inward parts, he pierced her heart.
He overcame her and cut off her life ;
He cast down her body and stood upon it.”

The death of their leader meant the rout of her host, and, most important of all, Marduk was able to seize the Tablets of Destiny, which determine the fate of all things, and to lay them upon his own breast, so that henceforth fate is in the hands of the gods. Remained the question of what was to be done with the corpse of Tiāmat. Marduk had his own plan for the disposal of it.

“ He divided the flesh of the body, having devised a cunning plan.
He split her up like a flat fish into two halves.
One half of her he set in place as a covering for the heavens.
He fixed a bolt, he stationed watchmen,
And bade them not to let her waters come forth.”

The other half of her carcass he seemingly fashions into “ the house of fullness ”—that is to say, the earth ; and under it he places the great deep. Then he makes two doors in the heavens, so that the sun may come out through the eastern one, march across the sky, and depart at night through the western one. Finally he calls Nannar, the moon-god, and hands over the night to him, appointing him also to measure the days and months of the year.

“ Nannar he caused to go forth, and handed over to him the night.
He appointed him, though a being of the night, to mark off the days.”

The stars and the constellations being fixed in their places, Marduk returns to be welcomed by the wondering gods. But seeing that the

earth that he had created was empty of inhabitants, he summoned Ea, another of the gods, and bade him smite off his head. Then, mixing Marduk's blood with clay, Ea made men to people the earth; Marduk, of course, being none the worse of his martyrdom.

This, then, was the Babylonian story of how the universe came into being, and, as you see, it is a much more complete and dramatic picture than the simple little Egyptian legends of Khnum making the world-egg on the potter's wheel, or Neith weaving the world like a garment. What did the Babylonians think that the world looked like when Marduk had finished it? An old Greek writer has told us very vividly in a single sentence. He says that the Babylonians believed that the world is like "a boat turned upside down." You remember that one of the Babylonian boats, a type of boat which is still used in Babylonia, is called the *gufa*, and is just a big round basket covered over with hides or pitch. That was the kind of boat to which they compared the world—or rather, they pictured to themselves two boats, one turned upside down, so that it looked like a big dome-shaped canopy overhead, and one right way up, so that its gunwale met the gunwale of the inverted boat all round. The upper boat was the sky. Its inside was sprinkled over with stars, and two doors were cut, one in the gunwale to the east, the other in the opposite side to the west, through which the sun came and went as he marched across the heavens. The under boat was the earth, but its bottom was not round like the dome of the sky. It was bulged up inside, something like the bottom of a wine-bottle. This bulge, which gradually rises to a mountain-summit in the middle of the boat, is the Mountain-of-the-Lands, where men dwell. Round about its base, forming a great circular moat just within the sides of the *gufa*, flow the waters of the great ocean-stream, and underneath, filling up the bulge, is the great deep.

You will notice that these two stories of the beginning, though they are so unlike one another in the details of the picture, are, after all, pretty much alike in their general outline. The Egyptian universe is an oblong box-world, with heaven, made out of iron, spread out over it, and resting upon its four pillars; the Babylonian universe is a round boat-world, with heaven like another round boat, forged out of metal, inverted over it, and resting upon its gunwale all round. But really all the difference is just that between round and oblong, and between a ceiling heaven and a dome one. Both universes are quite limited and small, and in both of them things happen much the same way as a child would imagine them happening, if he were making a little universe with bricks in his nursery. Ra, the sun-god of Egypt,

sailing round the heavenly Nile in his boat ; Marduk, the sun-god of Babylon, marching across the sky from the door of the east to the door of the west ; Thoth, the moon-god of Egypt, looking after folks through the night when Ra has left the sky, for all the world like a policeman on night duty ; and Nannar, the moon-god of Babylonia, marking off the days like a glorified town-clock with an illuminated dial. These are the kind of pictures that a child makes for itself quite naturally, when it tries to account for the things which it sees. And we have to remember that these men of the old world, though they were so astonishingly clever in many ways, were in others just children, put into the midst of a wonderful world, and trying to explain things which were far beyond their understanding by the help of things which they knew. If their little foot-rule did not reach the stars, how much farther does our yard-measure reach ?

CHAPTER V

STORIES OF GODS AND MEN IN THE OLD WORLD—EGYPTIAN

ONCE they had got their legends of how the world came into being, and how the heavens were stretched abroad over it, men went on to make up stories about the gods, and how they dealt with men, and how men dealt with them. One of the things that puzzled them in Egypt was how it was that the gods were no longer actually seen on earth, as they once used to be in the beginning. Of course they had images of them which were kept in the houses of the gods, and were carried through the streets of the towns now and then that people might see and adore them, and which were dressed and fed every day as though they were living ; but they knew, all the same, that these were only the pictures of the real gods, and they believed that once upon a time the real gods used to go about among men, not as their images did, but freely and constantly. What was it that had brought about the change, and sent the gods away to their home in the sky, while only their images were down here below ? The Egyptians early framed a legend to account for it. It was very quaint and childish, like their story of the making of the world ; but the main point of it was that it taught that the departure of the gods was man's blame, and that they might have been here still if men had not been wicked and rebellious. So that, though it is very unlike our Bible story of the same thing, it has this in common with it, that in both it is man's wrong-doing that drives God away.

Here is the story as it used to be told in Egypt when the world was young. Ra, you remember, was the sun-god, the chief of all the gods, who was the first to appear out of the great deep of watery chaos, and who ruled over everything. For a long time he ruled over gods and men together, and in those days the world was always bright and happy. But after a time Ra began to grow old. As the Egyptians put it, " His Majesty had become old, and his bones were silver, his flesh was gold, and his hair was real lapis lazuli." You see they pictured God just as if he were an earthly Pharaoh, and these changes that took place in his body were the signs of old age, just as a king

might become stiff and white-haired as he grew old. Now, when men saw the signs of age creeping over their god, they began to grow evil in their hearts, and to plan rebellion against him. Ra, who sailed round the world every day, soon saw what was happening, and understood what they were plotting against him.

He called together a council of the gods. There they came all together, grey old Nun, the ocean, out of which everything had come in the beginning, and Geb, the earth-god, and Nut, the sky-goddess, whose slender body, spangled with stars, arches over the earth, and Shu, the air-god, who separates earth from sky, and all the others with them. Ra's message ran: "Thou shalt bring them stealthily, in order that mankind may not see, and that their hearts may not be affrighted." So these gods were brought into the great council-hall, and they came nigh unto him, and they touched the ground with their foreheads (just as the courtiers used to do before Pharaoh), in the presence of His Majesty, that he might say his say in the presence of the Father of the Eldest Ones, him that had fashioned mankind, the King of Men. They said before His Majesty: "Speak to us, that we may hear it."

Then Ra told them how evil men had grown, and how they had planned rebellion against him. "Tell me what ye would do about it," he said. "Behold, I am still pondering over it, and I am not going to slay them until I have heard what ye may say about the matter." Old Nun, the eldest of them all, lifted up his grey head and answered: "O my son, who art mightier than I who created thee, only sit down on thy throne, and turn thine eye upon them, and their terror shall be great." "What use would that be?" asked Ra, "for already they have fled into the deserts in terror at what they have done." So at last the only counsel that the gods could give was that Ra should send out the swift and terrible goddess Hathor, who is also Sekhmet, the lioness-headed, the destroying heat of the sun, that she might slay the rebels wherever she found them.

Such an order was quite to the heart of the destroying goddess. She went forth into the desert, and wherever she found men she slew them mercilessly. She came back at night all blood-bespattered, and when Ra greeted her and praised her for doing as he had commanded, she cried fiercely: "By thy life I have prevailed over men, and that is pleasant to mine heart." But when Ra saw the savage joy of his avenger, his heart repented him of the evil that he had planned against man, and he feared lest none should be left alive on earth. Yet his command had been given, and he could not recall it. Then he spoke

to his followers and said: "Call to me swift-running messengers, that they may run as swiftly as a man's shadow runs before him." And when they were brought, the Majesty of this god said to them: "Get you to Elephantiné, and bring me much of the sleepy fruit that grows there." Then the messengers ran very swiftly, for before dawn they must reach the First Cataract, get the fruit, and be back at Heliopolis again.

So they came back laden with the fruit, and the god handed it to his maid-servants to bruise it, along with barley for beer, and they made 7,000 jars of beer as red as a man's blood. Then His Majesty the god Ra, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, set to work early, under cover of the night, to have this beer poured out over the land; and through the might of His Majesty the fields were filled with the beer to the depth of four palms. Hathor came forth in the morning, her heart rejoicing because she would slay yet more men this day; and lo, the land was flooded, as it were with blood. She beheld her own face in the flood as in a mirror, and she was pleased. Then she stooped and drank of the red flood, and it pleased her yet more; so she drank until she was drunken, and forgot all about mankind, and how she meant to slay them. Thus was the remnant of mankind saved from the rage of Sekhmet the destroyer.

But Ra was too disgusted with the wickedness of men to dwell longer among them. "I am weary," he said, "of remaining among men only to slay them." So he called to himself Nut, the sky-goddess, and bade her arch herself over the world. Nut obeyed, and stood over the earth in the shape of a great cow, whose four legs were the four pillars of the heavens. From the under-part of her body Ra hung the stars like lamps, and he himself climbed upon her back, and dwelt there, far above the world of men. When the morning came, and the repentant sinners came to give thanks to Ra for their deliverance, they found his palace empty, and, looking up to heaven, they found him seated on the back of the cow. Then they besought him to abide with them but one day longer, until they had made atonement for their rebellion; so Ra consented, and came back to his palace as they desired. Then, when the dawn came, they went forth with their bows and slew the men who had been the leaders in the rebellion. Then said His Majesty Ra to them: "Your sins are forgiven, for sacrifice protects the sinner from punishment." And this was the beginning of the sacrifice of living beings on earth.

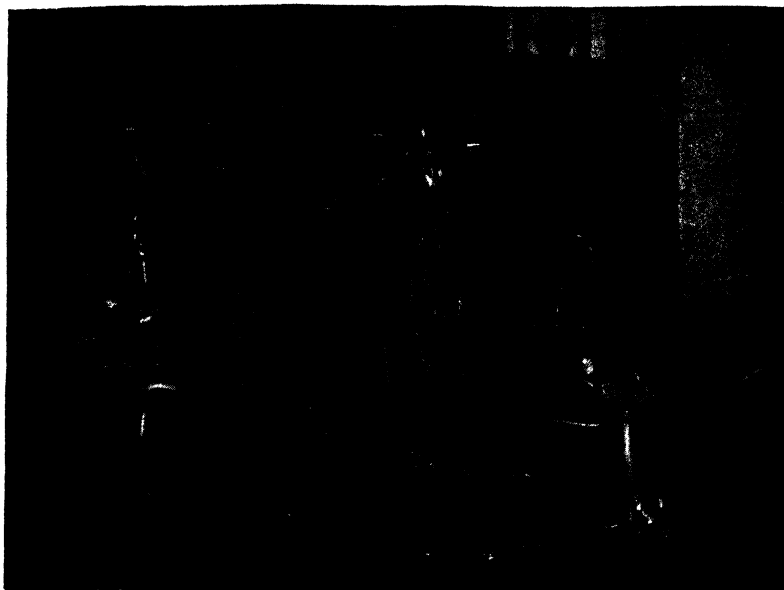
Such was the Egyptian's way of accounting to himself for the fact that his gods were not with him in person on earth, but had only left

their images. As to what he says about the beginning of sacrifice, no doubt it is quite true, so far as it goes, and the first offerings were of human lives, among the Egyptians as elsewhere. But that stage soon passed away, and animals were offered instead of men and women.

Next the Egyptian tried to account to himself for the way in which men had gained the knowledge of how to live, to cultivate the earth, to govern themselves, and all the rest of the things that make a civilized life possible ; and along with that, how it was that, knowing all these good things, men did so much evil, so that it is sometimes hard to tell whether good or evil rules in the world. He did this just as he had done with the business of accounting for the making of the world, and the departure of the gods, in the form of a story such as a child might tell.

In the beginning of all things, he said, four children were born to Nut, the sky-goddess. Their names were Osiris and Isis, and Set and Nephthys. Of these, Osiris was destined to be the king of the world, and when he was born a great voice was heard, sounding over the whole earth, and saying : " The lord of all the earth is born." Years passed on, and, as the custom was in Egypt with kings' sons and daughters, Osiris was married to his sister Isis, and Set to his sister Nephthys ; and Osiris was made king over the land of Egypt, with Isis as his queen. In those days Egypt was a land of fierce and cruel men, who knew no good, but were ever at strife with one another, and even ate human flesh. Yet little by little their new king drew them away from their evil ways, taught them how to till the land, and how to use writing, and to make music, and to be human beings instead of wild beasts. Nor did he only work for his own land, but journeyed over the world, teaching men everywhere to be wise and skilful and good.

But his brother, the red Set, was not like Osiris, but was evil, and hated all that was good, and Osiris because he was good. So while Osiris was travelling and teaching, Set gathered together some of the wicked men in Egypt who found the rule of Osiris too strict for their evil ways, and seventy-two of them plotted to put the good king to death. When Osiris came back from his travels, Set made a great feast to celebrate his brother's home-coming, and to the feast he invited Osiris and all the seventy-two who were in the plot. Now he had caused a wonderful chest to be made of cedar from Lebanon, inlaid with all manner of beautiful woods, and costly stones. It was so beautiful that no one could see it without wishing to possess it ;



OSIRIS, THE FIRST TEACHER OF THE EGYPTIANS, AND GOD OF THE RESURRECTION, WITH HIS WIFE ISIS.

The cow between them is another form of Isis, in which she was called Hathor.

and it was cunningly made so that its measures were exactly the same as those of the good king.

Now, when the feast was at its height, this chest was brought into the banqueting hall, and when all marvelled at its beauty, the traitor Set told them that it was to be given to the man who, lying down in it, should fit it exactly. So first one and then another lay down in the chest ; but none was of the right measure. At last they besought Osiris to try if perchance the chest might fit him ; but when he lay down in it, the wicked Set, with his fellow-conspirators, ran forward with the lid, fastened it down over the king, and sealed it with lead. Then in the darkness they carried the chest with the body of their king down to the bank of the Nile, and cast it into the river ; and they returned home, believing that they had done with Osiris and his righteousness for ever.

But the great river carried the chest down to the Very Green (the Mediterranean), and it floated on the waves until at last it was cast

ashore at the city of Byblos in Syria. There it lodged in the branches of a tamarisk tree which grew by the seashore, and when the tamarisk felt the body of the god within its arms, it shot up into a most beautiful tree, closing round the chest so that it could not be seen. All men wondered at the beauty of the tree, until at last King Malkander of Byblos heard of it ; and because so fine a tree was meet for a king's use, he set it up as a pillar in his own hall, and it stood there with the body of Osiris in its heart.

Meanwhile Queen Isis wandered over the whole land seeking her lost husband ; and when she could not find him she left her little son, Horus, in the care of the goddess of Buto, lest his wicked uncle Set might find and slay him, as he had slain his father. At last in her wanderings she came to Byblos, and by chance the Queen Athenais of Byblos took her into the palace as nurse to her son Diktys, who was weak and sickly. Under the goddess's care the boy grew strong, until one night Queen Athenais found Isis purifying him of his mortal weakness by laying his cradle in the midst of the fire. Thereat she was terrified, and snatched her child from the fire ; but Isis revealed herself as a goddess, and reproaching the queen for her weakness, which had cost her son his immortality, she departed to Egypt again, taking with her the chest of Osiris that was in the tamarisk pillar.

When she reached her own country she opened the chest, and saw the body of her husband ; but as she wept over him the wicked Set came upon her, seized the body of his brother and tore it into pieces, which he scattered over the land. But Isis gathered the pieces, and wherever she found one she buried it ; and this is why there are many cities in Egypt which claim to be the burial-place of Osiris. Then the gods anew gathered together the members of Osiris, and united them ; and Isis, by her cunning spells, brought back the life into them, and Osiris arose from the dead. In these years his son Horus had grown up, and he challenged the traitor Set to combat. It was a dreadful battle, but at last Horus proved the victor, and Set was cast down ; and when he still tried to accuse Osiris before the council of the gods, they refused to listen to his accusations, and declared Osiris to be just and righteous. Then, because he had been dead, and was alive again, they made him Judge and King of the Dead in the Underworld. So King Osiris reigns there in the Hall of the Twofold Truth ; and every man who passes out of this world into the other must appear before him, to have his deeds judged and his heart weighed against the truth. If he has done evil, and his heart accuses him in the balance, he perishes in the jaws of the Devourer of the Unjustified—a

grim monster, part crocodile, part panther, and part hippopotamus ; but if he is justified, like Osiris himself, he passes into the Fields of Rest, and is for ever in peace and happiness.

Thus, then, the Egyptians tried to account to themselves for the coming of wisdom and skill of all sorts into the world, and for the strange fact, which we all still wonder at, that wisdom and skill, goodness and righteousness, never have it all their own way in the world, but are often beaten down and overthrown by wickedness. They could not help seeing that this was so ; but they still believed, as we do, that right and wisdom would win in the end, and this was the moral of their tale of the good god who was killed by his evil brother, yet, though slain, conquered at last. And bit by bit they came also to believe that men who trusted in Osiris, and had tried to live as he had done on earth, would share in the victory which he had won, and live with him for ever.

sacred of Babylonian cities must have been near the sea in ancient days, before the rivers had pushed the Persian Gulf back so far.

One of the stories which the fish-man wrote down for the benefit of his pupils told how once, long ago, the gods sent a terrible flood upon the earth, from which only one household escaped in a vessel. The head of the household was called Xisuthrus, and the story of how he sent out birds to find if the flood was going back, and of how his ship finally stranded on a mountain side in the land of Armenia, is very like the Bible story of Noah and the Ark. Fortunately, however, the true ancient version of this legend of the flood was one of the first of the records of the old world which were found in Nineveh by Layard when he began to dig among the mounds of Mesopotamia, inscribed upon clay tablets in what had been the palace library of one of the Assyrian kings; and where pieces of the story were missing because of the tablets being broken, other tablets have since been found which help us to make up the gap in the story.

The Babylonian legend of the flood is really part of a much longer story which tells of the adventures of the great Babylonian hero Gilgamesh—a sort of Eastern Hercules. We have only to do with the part of it where, being afraid of death, he goes in search of immortality. Gilgamesh hears of one man and his wife who have become immortal, and after many adventures he comes to the place where Ut-napishtim, the immortal man, dwells with his wife. Ut-napishtim is astonished to see the hero coming across the waters to him, and Gilgamesh, sitting in his boat, tells him how many lands he has traversed, and how many difficulties he has conquered, and implores him to reveal the secret of how to escape death. But the answer of the immortal man is sad and hopeless. "Death comes to all," he says, "and no man may escape from it,

" As long as houses are built,
And as long as brethren quarrel,
And as long as there is hatred in the land,
And as long as the river beareth its waters to the sea."

Not unnaturally, Gilgamesh asks him how, if all this is true, he himself has escaped the doom of all men and become immortal. And then Ut-napishtim tells the story of the Deluge to explain matters.

Here is the tale as he told it. "I will reveal to thee, O Gilgamesh," he said, "the hidden word, and the decision of the gods will I declare unto thee." Then he goes on to tell how his city of Shurippak, on the Euphrates, had grown wicked, and the gods, and especially the great

god Bel, or Marduk, decided to bring destruction on it by a rainstorm. But one of the gods, Ea, the god of the deep, had mercy upon his servant Ut-napishtim, and so, when the council of the gods was over, he came to the hut where his worshipper dwelt, to warn him of the coming doom. He did not dare to speak at first directly to Ut-napishtim, because that would have been breaking faith with the other gods. So he spoke to the hut, knowing that the man within it would hear and understand :

“ O reed-hut, reed-hut ! O wall, wall !
 O reed-hut, hear ! O wall, understand !
 Thou man of Shurippak, son of Ubara-tutu,
 Pull down thy house, build a ship,
 Forsake thy possessions, take heed for thy life !
 And bring up seed of every living kind into the ship.
 As for the ship which thou shalt build,
 Well planned must be its dimensions,
 Its breadth and length shall bear proportion each to each,
 And thou shalt launch it on the ocean.”

Ut-napishtim was ready to obey, but he wished to know how he was to explain his strange proceedings to his townsfolk. Ea tells him that he is to answer them that Bel, the god of the earth, has cast him out, and that he is going to dwell with Ea, the god of the deep, in order to escape from the disaster that is coming, for

“ Over you a rainstorm shall come,
 Men, birds, and beasts will perish.”

Then comes the building of the ship. A great barge, 120 cubits (nearly 200 feet) long, is first built, and on this a house of 120 cubits high is reared. It has six storeys, and each storey has nine rooms. The whole is made water-tight by pouring pitch over it, though one would imagine that it must have been pretty top-heavy. This tremendous house-boat, which must have been very like the Noah's Ark of the nursery, was finished in six days, and was ready to take in its precious cargo on the seventh, which must surely be the record for quick shipbuilding, far before anything that the Clyde or the Tyne could do ; and the cargo is put on board.

“ All that I had, I loaded on the ship.
 With all the silver that I had, I loaded it,
 With all the gold that I had, I loaded it,
 With living creatures of all kinds I loaded it.
 I brought on board my whole family and household,
 Cattle of the field, beasts of the field, workmen—all this I took on board.”

Ut-napishtim waits till the last moment, when he sees the storm approaching, before he goes on board himself :

" When the time came
For the lord of the whirlstorm to rain down destruction,
I gazed at the earth,
I was terrified at its sight,
I entered the ship, and closed the door."

Then the storm came down with a vengeance, and so terrible was it that the very gods who had sent it were terrified at what they had done.

" Brother does not look after brother,
Men care not for one another. In the heavens
Even the gods are terrified at the storm,
They take refuge in the highest heaven,
The gods cowered like dogs at the edge of the heavens."

For seven days the tempest continues, and then Ishtar, the goddess of love and the mother of mankind, repents of the evil that has been done, and reproaches herself bitterly for having consented to it.

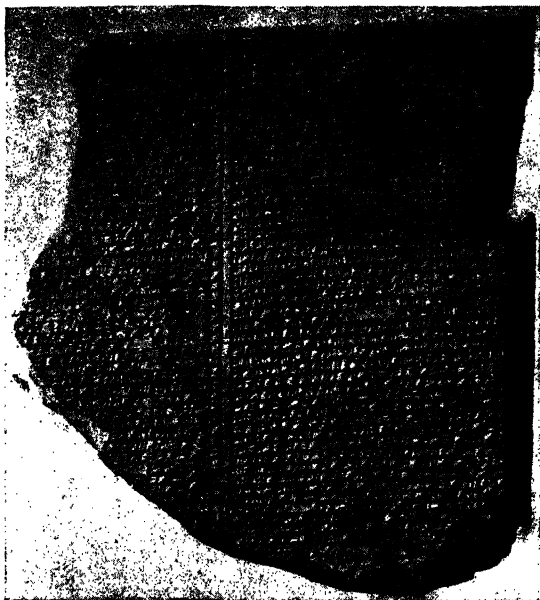
" That I should have assented to this evil among the gods !
That when I assented to this evil,
I was for the destruction of my own creatures ! "

Seeing her grief, all the other gods, except Bel, who remained hard-hearted, sat down and wept along with her ; but it was easier to set the mischief agoing than to stop it, and they could do nothing.

Meanwhile Ut-napishtim's great house-boat was drifting over the muddy waters, and when its owner looked out the sight was too much for him :

" Bitterly weeping, I looked at the sea,
For all mankind had been turned to clay.
I opened a hole so as to let the light fall upon my face,
And dumbfounded, I sat down and wept.
I looked in all directions—naught but sea."

Ere long, however, deliverance was at hand, and on the eighth day the ship drifted upon the mountain Nisir, which means protection or salvation, and here she remained fast. For six days Ut-napishtim waited, then on the seventh he sent out a dove, which flew about, but could find no resting-place, and so returned. Next he sent out a swallow, but it had no better fortune than the dove. At last he sent out a raven, which found that the waters had gone down, and waded



CLAY TABLET WITH PART OF THE BABYLONIAN
STORY OF THE DELUGE.

(*Photo, British Museum.*)

about cautiously in the mud, but did not return. So Ut-napishtim saw that he could now leave the ship, and before he did so he made a great sacrifice, like Noah, upon the top of the mountain.

The sacrifice was of all kinds of sweet-smelling woods, and the gods, who in these ancient stories are often by no means dignified folk, came in a great hurry to enjoy it.

"The gods inhaled the odour,
The gods inhaled the sweet odour,
The gods gathered like flies around the sacrificer."

Then Ishtar swears a solemn oath that she will never forget those days, and says that Bel alone shall have no part of the sacrifice, because he was so hard-hearted about the destruction of mankind. Bel, however, has no intention of being kept out of it. He comes in great anger to see who has spoiled his plan by saving some of the evil

race of men ; but Ea makes him a long speech, telling him how foolish he had been, and how a flood was the very last thing he should have brought upon the earth. He might have sent lions, tigers, famine, or pestilence to diminish mankind ; anything would have been better than a flood. So at last Bel saw reason, and since Ut-napishtim had survived, the gods concluded that it would be best to make him and his wife immortal like themselves.

" Bel came to his senses,
He stepped on board of the ship.
He took me by the hand, and lifted me up,
Brought up my wife, and caused her to kneel by my side,
Turned toward us, stepped between us, and blessed us.
' Hitherto Ut-napishtim was human,
But now Ut-napishtim and his wife shall be gods like us.
Ut-napishtim shall dwell far away, at the meeting of the rivers.'
Then they took me and placed me far away, at the meeting of the rivers."

Such, then, is the Babylonian legend of the coming of evil among men, and what followed. It is very different from the Egyptian one, and perhaps it is even more vivid. In both stories, however, you cannot help noticing the curiously childish view that is taken of the gods. They may be very powerful, but they are foolish themselves, and have to be treated just like children. Hathor being turned aside from killing men by the sight of the blood-red beer which makes her drunk ; the Babylonian gods cowering like dogs around the battlements of heaven, and helplessly watching the mischief they had set agoing but could not stop, or clustering like flies around the sweet-smelling sacrifice : these are the kind of gods that children might make for themselves in the nursery. And it is just here that the Babylonian stories, like this of the flood, differ so much from the similar stories of the Bible. In many respects they are astonishingly alike, as you cannot have failed to see in the story of the Flood—so much alike that they must have come originally from the same source as that from which the Hebrews learned of these things ; but the Hebrews—how we do not know—had learned to know of a God very different from these childish gods of the old Babylonians. These men of the oldest world were wonderfully wise and clever, and we owe them more than we often dream of ; but for one kind of knowledge they had to wait for the people of a little country that they would have despised, to teach the world.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST OF THE PHARAOKHS

How did the people who lived in these river-lands of the Nile valley and Mesopotamia first become nations, instead of little groups of families or even tribes? We are so familiar with the idea of nations and of national life that it is difficult for us to imagine a time when there was not such a thing as a nation, but each little community lived its own life apart from each other, except for small exchanges of the things that one community wanted, and another perhaps had too many of, or the passing on of new ideas about the best ways of chipping flint, or building wattle and daub houses. Yet that time was real enough and important enough, and it lasted far longer than all the time of what we call civilized life has lasted. Now it is quite plain that the folks of the two river-lands began to grow into something like nations far sooner than those in other parts of the world. They were sooner with everything. When the other races round about the Mediterranean and in western Europe were still nothing more than hunters, living part of the year perhaps in open camps, and the rest of it in caves and rock shelters, the Nile valley and Babylonian folk were building houses for themselves, beginning to be farmers instead of hunters, and to depend for their living on sowing and reaping instead of upon the chances of the chase. While other races were still doing nothing with the animals around them except to kill them for food and to use their skins for clothing, the two river races were beginning to make friends and servants of the wild beasts. And while the other races were still finding nothing better for tools and weapons than flint, our friends of the river-lands were beginning to find out some of the wonderful things which could be done with copper, and to dream of chisels and axes, swords and spears, made out of this strange new thing. Therefore we should naturally expect that, as it was in other things, so it would be in this too, and the first nations and kingdoms would be found by the side of the Nile or the Euphrates. And so it was, but the ways in which the kingdoms grew in these two lands were very different.

First of all let us think of Egypt, which wonderfully soon took the way of a single kingdom reaching from end to end of the Nile valley, and ruled over by a single king, who came to be called Pharaoh. Think of what we have learned about the country—that long narrow ribbon of black soil, where the towns and villages lie in an endless twisting line, like so many beads strung upon the thread of the great river. Was there ever a country that looked less likely to become a single united nation? In our country a town may have half a dozen other towns lying in a circle all round it; there are neighbours on every side of it, and people naturally mix and find common interests and friendships. But in the Nile valley each town could only have neighbours either up-stream or down-stream, and these would have to be miles away, or there wouldn't be enough land between for the two towns to live upon. East and west were only the deserts, where nobody lived but a few wandering Arabs, who were friends to none of the towns. So the people in one part of the land might know nothing about the people in another part, and each little district would shape its own ways of living and managing, and its own thoughts about gods and men, without any regard to what its neighbour district, perhaps only twenty miles away, was doing or thinking.

That was how things really went on at first. Each little district, sometimes even each little town, made its own little world for itself. It had its own bit of land, north and south, marked jealously off from that of its neighbours on either hand; it had its own town god or district god, whose house was the finest building in the little place; it had its big man, who was often the priest of the local god, as well as the ruler of the town. The whole river valley was divided up into these little communities, which were quite independent of each other, like so many water-tight compartments. And, strangely enough, that time when there was not one community, but scores of little communities in Egypt, left its mark on the history and the religion of the land down through all the many centuries when the nation was one, with one king whose word no one dared question. Perhaps you have wondered how it was that a people so wise as the Egyptians ever had such a religion as they had, with scores of gods, and the most terrible mix-up of ideas which nobody has ever succeeded in straightening out. Folks used to talk about "the thousand gods of the Egyptians," and though perhaps that was an exaggeration, it was not so very far out. The reason was that all these scores upon scores of gods were just the little town and district gods of the little communities before Egypt became one kingdom. The Egyptians always had the greatest reverence for

anything that belonged to the past ; and so, though the nation became one, they never scrapped the old gods and thought of God as one also, but just took over all the gods of the different places and found corners for them in the national religion.

But there was one thing that steadily forced them to give up the old way of separate communities and aim at being one nation. I said that they were like so many water-tight compartments, but the trouble was that the compartments were not water-tight. Every year came the inundation ; the flood water had to be managed, and when it had gone back there were canals to be dug and cleaned out, if the crops were to be kept watered and fresh. A little community could perhaps do that for a while in a kind of a way, but it was quite plain that if two or three communities got together and helped one another the work would be far more quickly and thoroughly done. Then, among the big men of the two or three townships who were putting their heads together over the job, there would be one, as there always is on a committee, who had a better head for business and had more go than the others, and he came to the top and became a kind of informal chief of the district irrigation committee. When they had got so far, it was easy to take the next step, and to make the district one for all purposes, as well as for the water question, with the clever and strong man at the head of it ; and so the old separations were broken down bit by bit.

Once they had learned how much more powerful a big community was than a little one, you can easily understand how the thing grew, how districts united or were forced into uniting if they hesitated, and how the big man at the head of each union grew more and more powerful, until at last he was very like what we call a king, and his district was just pretty much a little kingdom. That was exactly what happened. Bit by bit the little communities were absorbed into bigger ones, until at last, when the first dim rays of what we can call history begin to strike through the darkness of prehistoric times, we can faintly see at least five big districts which had grown up in Egypt—five kingdoms, if you like to call them so, and, ruling over them, five races of big men whom you can call kings.

One of these kingdoms, perhaps the most powerful at first, was Lower Egypt, the broad fan of the Delta. It had a capital city which was called Buto, and later another one which was called Sais. The patron goddess of Buto was the Cobra Utho, and the patron goddess of Sais was the weaver and archer goddess Neith, whose symbol was a shield and two crossed arrows. The king's title was *Bya*, which means

Bee or Hornet, and his sign was the figure of a bee. He wore a curious red crown shaped much like the cap of the Doges of Venice, and the badge of his country was a tuft of the papyrus plant, just as the rose stands for England and the thistle for Scotland. South of the Delta came another little kingdom, whose capital at first was at a town called Ehininsi, but was afterwards shifted to a place which the Egyptians called White Wall, and which afterwards came to be called Memphis, one of the most famous cities in the world. The king of this kingdom was called *Insi*, which means Reed. He wore for a crown a tall, conical white cap, and the colour of his kingdom was white, just as that of the Delta was red. Far to the south, about three-quarters of the way to the First Cataract, there was a third kingdom, which became one of the most famous of them all. Its capital was a town which the Egyptians called Nekhen, and the Greeks Hierakonpolis, nearly half-way between the present Luxor and Aswan, and its king was called *Hor*, the Hawk, and had the golden hawk as his badge. These were the three most important of the old kingdoms; but besides them there was another one between the Hawk kingdom and the Reed one, at a place called Thinis, and its kings wore as a badge first something rather like a Tudor rose, and later a hawk like their southern neighbours. The last of the kingdoms was that of the Set people, who lived partly in the curious pocket of fertile land that is called to-day the Fayum, and whose badge was a strange animal with cocked-up ears, which may be the modern "okapi."

How long these kingdoms had been in existence after they had swallowed up all the other little communities we do not know, but when the daybreak of history begins to come, we can see these five kingdoms dimly, dividing between them all the land of Egypt. Now, just as the conservative Egyptians revered all the little gods of the little towns because they belonged to the past, so it was with these kingdoms, or at least with three of them. The real history of Egypt as a nation knows nothing about them, but the Egyptians themselves never forgot that there had once been a time when they existed, and their names and badges went down to the very end of Egyptian history in every Pharaoh's title and in the very crown which he wore. Pharaoh was always *Insi-Bya*, the Reed-Hornet Man, to keep alive the memory of the Reed kingdom and the Hornet one; the badge of the whole nation was the Papyrus and the Reed, so that the two national badges should not be forgotten. Nobody could imagine that the Hawk kingdom of Nekhen was being slighted, for Pharaoh claimed as his first of titles to be the Golden Hawk, and the Vulture goddess of

Nekhen perched beside the upreared Cobra—twin emblems of the divine protection over Pharaoh. Sometimes the king wore the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, and sometimes the White Crown of Upper Egypt ; but, when he wished to show his full state and glory, both of them were combined into that curious red and white mitre which we know as the Double Crown of Egypt. If you look at the portraits of the head of Tutankhamen that have been so common for a few years, you will see, still upreared above the brow of the poor boy-king, the Cobra of Buto and the Vulture of Nekhen side by side, so that none who looked on Pharaoh could ever forget the days of old when Egypt was not one, but many.

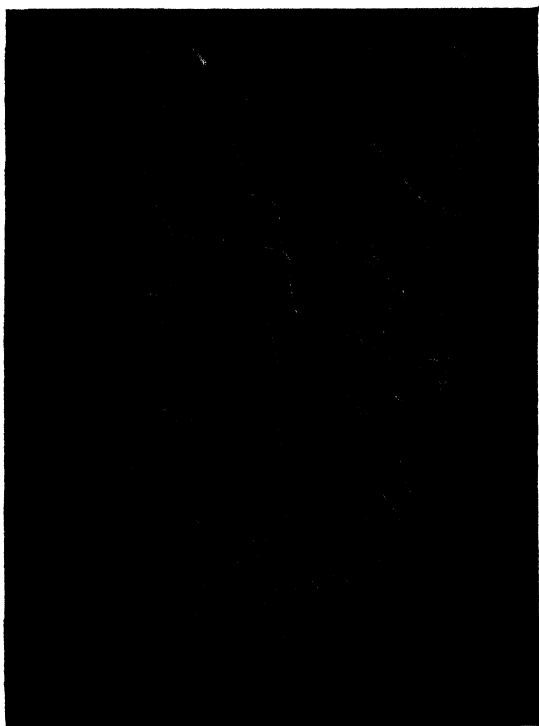
How all these different little kingdoms were brought together into one at last we only partly know. One thing we are sure of, that it was not all by peaceful means, for we have some rude old carvings still surviving from those far-off days which show all the horrors of war—captives being led in triumph with their arms bound behind them, enemies in the shape of wild bulls breaking into fortified towns, and battlefields strewn with dead bodies, which are being devoured by lions and vultures. Now and again, perhaps, one kingdom may have been allied with another through a marriage in the royal households, but mostly it was war which settled which kingdom was to be master. After a while we can see the Hawk kings of Nekhen coming more or less to the top in Upper Egypt ; we can hear the names of one or two of the early Hawk kings—simple old one-syllable names like Ro and Ket, such names as an infant nation would give its leaders ; and then we see all of a sudden that the Hawk king has taken to wearing the tall conical cap, the White Crown, of his neighbour the Reed king of Ehininsi and Memphis. How he got the right to do so we have no idea. It may have been by marriage with a daughter of the Reed king, or by conquest. Anyhow, there he was, uniting the two kingdoms, though he did not begin to call himself *Insi* yet awhile ; and the Hornet king of Buto and Sais had to realize that he had a big and powerful rival who commanded the whole of the Upper Valley. Before these two settled which was to be master of all Egypt there was sure to be trouble.

Now the Egyptians had an old legend that the first king of united Egypt was a great man called Menes or Mena, who “reigned sixty-two years,” as an old Egyptian historian tells us, “and perished by a wound received from a hippopotamus ;” not an unlikely end for a king in those ancient days, when wild beasts swarmed over all the country, and a great part of a king’s duty was the keeping of them down. All

sorts of legends grew up about Mena, and he came to be to the Egyptians much what King Arthur is to us—a wonderful half-mythical hero, of whom nobody knew very much certainly, but whom everybody believed to have been the greatest and best of all kings. Actually, what has been found out within recent years seems to show that there were really three great kings just about this time, one after the other, all of the Hawk line, that it was these three who made Egypt one, and that the later Egyptians mixed up their great deeds all together, and made out of the three the one great misty legendary figure of Mena, their type king.

Of the first of the three we do not even know the name, but he bore a scorpion as his badge, and so we know him as the Scorpion. He was a conqueror, but he was more than that, and knew how to care for the interests of his people. He is the first Pharaoh of whom we have a picture showing him in his full royal get-up at a big ceremony. He presented a great carved mace-head to the temple at Hierakonpolis, and in 1898 Mr. Quibell dug it up there from the temple ruins. On one side of the mace you see a procession of the standards of all the tribes who marched to battle under the Scorpion. From some of the standards miserable birds, symbolizing the king's enemies, hang by the neck, while from others hang the captured bows of other tribes. But on the other side of the mace King Scorpion goes out, dressed in all his best, to cut the first sod of a new irrigation canal. On his head is the White Crown of the Reed kingdom, round his body is girt a lion's skin, with the tail hanging down behind his legs, and behind him two fan-bearers wave the big semicircular fans with long handles which the Egyptian kings used for thirty centuries. Specimens of ones exactly like these of the Scorpion were found in Tutankhamen's tomb, with the roots of the ostrich feathers still sticking in the gold mounting. So we see the first of the great Egyptian Pharaohs, not yet monarch of the whole country, but filling, as every good king had to fill at that time, the double part of warrior and agriculturist.

Narmer, the king who succeeds the Scorpion, makes a bigger and perhaps a grimmer figure. He, too, left gifts to the temple at Hierakonpolis, and we have two of them—another mace-head and a great palette, such as was used for grinding face-paint, only this one is too big to have been really used for that. On the mace-head we see the king seated upon his throne under a canopy, while some ceremony is going on before him, and a woman sits in a palanquin in front of the throne. Below this scene there is a record of the king's captures in some campaign, and it reads: "Prisoners, 120,000; oxen, 400,000;



KING NARMER SLAYS A CONQUERED ENEMY.

goats, 1,420,000." Plainly a war in which captures on a gigantic scale like this were made was no mere quarrel between tribes, but a great national strife. When you look again at Narmer's figure on the throne, you can see what the war must have been, for he is wearing not his own White Crown, but the Red Crown of the Horner king. So what we are seeing is the record of how the Horner kingdom was conquered by the united Hawk and Reed kingdoms; and perhaps the woman in the palanquin is the captive princess of the Horner royal house, who may be going to be married to the conqueror.

The great palette tells the same story of conquest. On one side of it Narmer, wearing the White Crown, swings his mace to brain a kneeling captive, whose name is written beside him—"Chieftain of the

Lake District." On the other side he wears the Red Crown, and goes out, preceded by four standard-bearers, to view the dead bodies of his slain enemies, which are laid out in two neat rows, with their severed heads quite tidily tucked away between their feet. The Lake District probably means the curious hollow of fertile land to the west of the Nile, which we call the Fayum to-day, and where there has always been a lake, as there is still. Narmer, then, is the great soldier who beat the Hornet king out of his kingdom, and the chief of the Fayum out of his province, and brought the whole of the land, from the Mediterranean up to the First Cataract, under the sceptre of one Pharaoh.

The third and last of the great early kings who make up Egypt's legendary King Arthur was called by the name Mena, which was finally used to label not only his doings, but those of the Scorpion and Narmer as well. He had another name—Aha, which means the Fighter; but we do not know how he earned it, for no accounts of his wars have come down to us, as they have in the case of his predecessors. But we know that he married a princess called Neithotep, who must have been called after the goddess of Sais in the Hornet kingdom, and that she was given a name which means "The Uniter." So perhaps she may be the palanquin lady of Narmer's mace-head, and she may have married, not the grim old soldier himself, but the young prince Mena, his son. Anyhow, we find now that Mena calls himself both *Insi* and *Bya*, Reed and Hornet king, as well as Hawk king, and henceforward all the kings of Egypt do the same.

Apart from this, we know wonderfully little of the first acknowledged king of all Egypt, the first Lord of the Two Lands, as the Egyptians always called their Pharaoh, keeping alive, as you see again, the memory of old times. It is said that he was the first king to teach his people many of the arts and crafts of civilized life, "how to adorn their couches and tables with rich cloths and coverings, and to bring in an elegant and sumptuous way of living." Probably that means no more than that, now that the great wars of union were past, he taught them to be no longer merely rough soldiers, but to learn how to make life beautiful and comfortable as well as safe; and if so, he was surely a wise man. The priests of Egypt had a tradition that it was he who chose for his capital the spot where the great city of Memphis afterwards stood, near to where Cairo now stands, and that he built a great dam to divert the waters of the Nile, and leave the site clear for his city.

Then, after his long reign, he died, whether in the hippopotamus



"THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF CIVILIZED LIFE."

Early wood carving of an Egyptian nobleman.

hunt or not we cannot tell, though that seems a rough job for a man of more than seventy years to have been engaged in ; and he was buried, where all the kings of his line had been buried, not at the new city, but away up the Nile at holy Abydos. There, nearly thirty years ago, Sir Flinders Petrie found his tomb—a great brick-lined pit with a wooden wainscot. Robbers had plundered it many centuries ago, but there could still be seen some traces of his splendour—a bar of fine gold, beautifully worked, with the king's name upon it, and little tablets of ebony and ivory, showing pictures of him making offerings to the gods. Not far from his grave was another, in which, as well as in the king's own tomb, were some ivory articles for the toilet

which bore a name which Petrie reads as Bener-ab, which means "sweetheart." Mr. Weigall tries to persuade us that the words merely mean "date-wine," but what date-wine has to do with ivory toilet objects one cannot see. So we may continue to believe that the great king's little daughter, whom he loved and called "Sweetheart," just like any other man, was buried beside her famous father. Somehow it seems to bring those far-off days nearer to us when we learn how human were those dim old figures, and how closely love and sorrow were linked then, as they are still.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAKING OF THE FIRST CITIES

MEANWHILE, away up in Babylonia, things had been going on somewhat differently. The people who were masters in Babylonia at this time were just as far advanced in everything that belongs to civilized life as their rivals down in Egypt—in fact, some believe that they were even farther on in the arts and crafts, and that the Egyptians in some ways learned from them, though that is by no means certain. Anyhow, by the time that the Scorpion, Narmer, and Mena were building up the Egyptian kingdom, there were men in Babylonia who could do the most wonderful work in gold and bronze, almost as wonderful as the work which the Egyptian goldsmiths were doing more than 2,000 years later for the funeral of Tutankhamen. Mr. C. L. Woolley has been digging out of the sands at Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's town, beautiful things that were buried and forgotten 1,500 years before Abraham was thought of—the great wig of hammered gold which an old prince of Ur wore on state occasions, the daggers of gold or copper with hilts decorated with lapis lazuli, which the nobles carried; the golden vanity-case of a great lady, with its dainty tweezers and ear-scoop of gold, and the lovely fluted golden bowl, with its handles of deep blue lapis lazuli. Everything shows that they were great folk in Babylonia five and a half millenniums ago, when Egypt was being hammered into unity by her three great kingdom-builders; only they did things in their own way, which was not the Egyptian way.

These people of the earliest days there, you have to understand, were by no means the same people that we shall meet in Assyria and Babylonia later on. They were quite a different race, perhaps a gentler, certainly a more likeable race than the bitter Semites who succeeded them. Where they came from originally we don't quite know as yet. Perhaps the last stage of their journey, before they found a resting-place on the fertile Babylonian plain, was up among the Persian highlands; but just the other day Sir John Marshall has been finding in the Indus valley the remains of big cities of more than 5,000 years ago, which seem to show that the Sumerians, as they are

called, must have had a connection with India before they came to Babylonia. They may have come partly by land, across the Persian hills, and partly by sea, up the Persian Gulf ; and when you remember the old story of how Oannes the fish-man brought knowledge and art to the land out of the Persian Gulf, it seems quite likely that some of them came by this way.

Anyhow, by the time that Egypt was becoming a single kingdom they were fairly established in Babylonia, and were building great cities and thriving amazingly. But, whatever was their reason for it, instead of trying to make a single kingdom out of the whole land, as the Egyptians were doing, they began by making a little state out of each city, so that the country was dotted over with a score or more of little independent kingdoms, each living its own life within its own strong walls, each very jealous of its next neighbours, and often quarrelling with them, but on the whole wonderfully prosperous and happy. And this was the beginning of one of the two great ideas of government which divided the world in ancient days. The one, which proved victorious in the end, was the idea of the kingdom or empire, such as you had in Egypt itself, and even in Babylonia later on—an idea which reached its height in the Roman Empire ; the other was the idea of the city-state, in which each community stood on its own feet, and was responsible only to itself ; and the most wonderful result of the city-state was seen in Greece, in the days when a little city like Athens led the whole world. Which was the better way, who can tell ? Certainly the big empire idea won in the end, but when one thinks of all that the world owes to the little city-states, one has still a lingering wish that the brave little cities might not have had to go under before the big battalions of the empires.

The reason for building a city, to begin with, was pretty plain. Here were our Sumerians, incomers into a new land, who had perhaps turned out the ruder folk who were living there before them. Whether that was so or not, at all events there were neighbours on either side of them, wild wanderers of the desert on the south, wilder raiders from the mountains on the north, who wanted nothing better than to help themselves to the cattle that the Sumerians were rearing, the crops that they were cultivating, and the beautiful work in gold and copper that their clever craftsmen were doing. If you wanted to keep yourselves and your possessions safe, you had to stick together. Besides, with the rivers flooding the country, and needing to be looked after, with canals to dig and keep up on every hand, there was no sense in trying to live separately.



" MEN WHO COULD DO WONDERFUL WORK : " A COPPER STATUE
OF A BULL FROM UR, FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OLD.

(Museum of University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, U.S.A.)

So, first of all, the incomers began to draw together in clusters for safety and convenience, until gradually the little community grew big enough to make a town. From the very first there would be some kind of defence round about the mud houses that they built. Probably, as they had to get above the flood-water, there would be a kind of platform raised up to lift the houses a few feet, and the trench out of which the earth of the platform was dug would make a ditch round about the little place, which would be lined, on the townward side, with a wooden stockade. Next, as the town grew bigger, would come a wall instead of the wooden stockade. There was no stone to build it with, for Babylonia is a "made" land—made out of soil brought down by the rivers ; but if stone was lacking, there was plenty of good clay. So the clay was made into bricks, and the bricks were dried in the hot sun, and there was the material for your wall ready to hand. Of course it was not so good as stone, and you had to build it pretty thick if you wanted it to stand against attack. Your wall might be

20, 30, 40 feet thick—indeed, the great wall of Babylon itself was between 80 and 90 feet thick. By and by, however, folk learned how to bake the bricks in a kiln, and to face the outside of the wall with these hard kiln-burnt bricks, which were almost as good as stone for standing the battering-ram or the sappers' picks.

Inside the wall the mud-brick houses were closely crowded together. If you were fairly well off, your house would have an open court in the middle, and round the court would be one or two pretty large rooms, floored with mud-brick, and with benches of brick round the walls, where the family and its visitors squatted on reed mats. Besides these public rooms, there would be several small rooms for sleeping in. The benches would be practically the whole of your furniture, except for the water-jars and cooking-pots, which were also made, often beautifully, out of the universal clay. Your fireplace would be built of clay, and even the beads which the women of the household wore as an ornament were made of clay dipped in glaze.

That would be the style of an average house. But there were two houses in the city very different. The first would be the house of the city-god. Just as in Egypt, each city had its own god, who was supposed to look after its interests, to give fertility to the city fields, to multiply its herds, and to make the arms of its men strong in the day of battle: so there would go up a big house in the centre of the city to Ningirsu, if the city was Lagash; to Enlil, if it was Nippur; to Nannar, if it was Ur. Within this house there would be a very holy shrine, where offerings were made on an altar before the image of the god; and the rest of the house would be taken up with storehouses where the gifts of the people were laid up, with a big kitchen where the sacrifices were made ready, and round the courtyard would be the houses of the priests. In one corner of the courtyard would rise a big brick tower, climbing up by stages until it might be 80 or 100 feet high, or more, if your town was a big one and could afford it.

The other big house is the house—or the palace, if you like to call it so—of the big man of the place. Originally, I suppose, he was just the strongest or cleverest man of the little community, who naturally came to the front when there was business about the canals to be done, or fighting to be carried on. After a while he was made permanently the chief, and now he is a kind of combination of chief and high priest of the town-god. He is called the *patesi*, and thinks no end of himself, though, after all, his little kingdom is no bigger than that of many a mayor or provost in England or Scotland.

If you climb up to the top of the temple-tower (supposing the priests would allow you), you will see the limits of the city-state. Close outside the walls is a ring of fields, which are waving with corn or green with vegetables. Here and there are clusters of palm trees, which are as carefully looked after as the crops. Beyond the fields comes another wider circle of green pasture-land, with the high bank of an irrigation canal running through it, which leads the water of the river right up almost to the city walls, and is watched and tended as our most precious treasure. Far in the distance you can dimly trace another ring of green pastures, almost touching the utmost rim of our own, and within this ring a circle of cornfields, just like ours. At the heart of it, if you look carefully, you will catch a glint of light, like the twinkling of a star. It is the sunlight flashing back from the gilded pinnacle of the shrine on the top of the temple-tower of our neighbour city and rival.

The two rings of pasture, you see, are almost touching one another. In another year or two they will actually touch, as each city grows bigger and needs more land. Then there will be trouble. The herdsmen will quarrel over the right of their cattle to grazing-ground or to water; a fight will begin, and a man on one side or the other will be wounded or perhaps killed. Word of the squabble is carried home; the patesi goes up to the temple to offer sacrifice and to pray his god for success in the battle that is going to come off. Meanwhile the townsmen have taken down their copper helmets and their long spears from the rafters, and by the time that the patesi has finished his business at the temple, and got the promise of victory, they are standing ranked in a close phalanx, bristling with spears, ready to be led against their enemy. With their peaked copper helmets and long lances, they look uncommonly like the Norman knights of William the Conqueror, as you see them on the Bayeux Tapestry.

Probably the battle is not a very big one, and a matter of anything from thirty to sixty slain seems to satisfy the patesi as quite enough to make a big victory. The bit of pasture-land over which the squabble arose is taken possession of, and a treaty is made and sealed by a boundary-tablet, and the beaten city promises not to trespass on the disputed land again—a promise which she will keep just till she feels strong enough to break it. Then she will march out, tumble down the boundary-tablet, drive off the shepherds of her late conqueror, and the whole business will have to be done over again.

Once in a while it comes to more than this. The patesi of some town is either extra ambitious, or extra confident in the valour of his militia.

Instead of marching home again when he has taught his neighbour city to know its place, he storms the city and brings it under his own rule. Then, with his army doubled, he attacks another neighbour, and adds it and its lands to his kingdom. So the process goes on, until he gets quite beyond himself with pride, and calls himself "King of the Four Quarters of the World," or some other highfalutin title like that. Then when things have reached that stage, there generally rises up another strong man who topples him down and undoes all that he has done, and the whole process begins again from the start.

It doesn't sound very sensible or profitable, does it? But during all this time, while the little city-states were spending themselves on these stupid little squabbles, the men who made them were all the time growing wiser and more skilful, so that much of the most remarkable work of these ancient days comes from these little places which did so much with what seems to us such poor material. Perhaps there has never been a time or a place in which man has learned more, or advanced more steadily in all that makes us different from the brutes, than in those far-off days in Babylonia, when the cities were striving with each other, and each was trying its utmost to lead its little world in wisdom, skill, and power.

All this time I have not told you of what kind of people these Sumerians were, who built the first cities and made the first city-states, which were to lead men so far—to Athens and all the wonders of Greek wisdom and art in the end. You are not to think that they were in the least like those bearded and curled Assyrians and Babylonians that you will see in the British Museum. There are Sumerians in the Museum too, but they are not nearly so conspicuous, and there are not nearly so many of them, so that you will have to look for them if you want to see what they were like. They were, to our minds, rather a quaint people, with curious bird-like faces, whose bird-look is made all the more conspicuous by their prominent beak-like noses. Instead of wearing big curly beards, well greased, like the Assyrians and Babylonians, they kept their faces and heads clean shaven, which was a much cleaner idea in a climate like that of Babylonia. They allowed their gods to wear big beards (with the upper lip shaven, so that a Sumerian god looks just like an old-fashioned Scottish elder); but then a god was not exposed to sun and dust, and did not get hot and dirty like his worshippers. Judging from their later clothing, I suppose that originally they used to wear sheepskins, but when we come to know them they had long given over that custom, and were wearing woven garments. The men wore a curious long scalloped

kilt, elaborately pleated. It was fastened round the waist, and generally hung down below the knees—a most untidy-looking dress ; but the upper part of the body was left quite bare. The women wore a dress of the same stuff, which was draped over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder and arm bare. Altogether, they do not look nearly so smart in their funny long kilts as the Egyptians of the same time, with their tidy white linen short kilt and girdle ; but all the same they were a very wonderful people, and we are only beginning now to find out how much the world owes to them. Already, when they came into Babylonia, they had a writing of their own. To begin with, it must have been a picture-writing, something like the Egyptian hieroglyphic ; but by the time we see them they had long given up the pretty but awkward picture-writing for the earliest form of the arrow-headed writing which later became cuneiform. When the Semites came into the land and conquered these Sumerians, they brought their own Semitic language (a cousin of Hebrew) along with them ; but they revered the old Sumerian speech so much, for all the wisdom that it had taught to men, that they kept it on as the sacred language, and their hymns and litanies were written in old Sumerian, just as the Roman Church has kept up the use of Latin in its services, though scarcely anybody understands it, any more than the average Babylonian understood Sumerian.

CHAPTER IX

THE GIANT BUILDERS OF THE OLD WORLD

LIKE their friends in Babylonia, the Egyptians of the earliest age began by building with the thing which was handiest to them and easiest to get, which, in their case, was Nile mud. Here and there the traces of their rude old houses have been found—the sockets in which stood the wooden posts that formed the corners of the house, even a little of the mud wall, and, in one or two places, the clay kilns in which they dried their corn so as to make it keep better. But, before very long, they began to realize that they had a far better and more lasting material than mud-brick almost as handy, though it might be harder to work. Rain doesn't fall often in Egypt, especially in the Upper Valley; but when they did get a heavy thunder-shower, then they found that their mud-brick buildings had a poor chance. Perhaps it didn't matter so much for common houses, which were easily plastered up again with a little more mud, but it was a very different thing when you came to the "eternal houses" of the kings—the tombs where they were laid, with all their treasures about them; or to the houses of the gods. Something better had to be got for them, which would last through all storms, and for endless ages.

Fortunately the something was not very far to seek. Though Egypt had a rich "made" soil like Babylonia, it had plenty of good stone as well in the hills quite close on either side of the valley. If you wanted limestone, there was plenty in the eastern hills not far from Mena's new capital, Memphis. If you preferred sandstone, there was abundance at Silsileh, far up the river. At Aswan, where the First Cataract came rushing down, you could get beautiful red granite, and there was plenty of alabaster at Hatnub, halfway between Memphis and Aswan. And for all these you had the broad, quiet Nile, ready to carry your heavy cargoes of stone wherever you wished. If you wanted some of the rarer stones, like the fine red porphyry, or green basalt, you had to go up into one of the side valleys which led through the Arabian hills to the Red Sea; but even that was not so very far away, and the beautiful stones were plentiful among the hills. So it was not



THE OLDEST LARGE STONE BUILDING IN THE WORLD: ZESER'S
STEP PYRAMID AT SAKKARA.

long before the Egyptian kings began to use stone for the buildings which they counted important, and wished to last.

First of all, not long after the three great founders of united Egypt, one of the kings, Den, has a fine granite floor put into his tomb instead of the old brick lining. Then a great fighting king of the next line, Khasekhemui, goes a little further, and has the whole central chamber of his tomb built of limestone. And then, almost at a jump, you find that the Egyptians have taken to building in stone as if this was the one thing that they had been made for; and King Zeser is making a huge tomb for himself that you can still see and wonder at to-day. It stands at Sakkara, not very far from Cairo, and quite near to where Memphis used to stand; and when you think that it is the first large stone building in the world, it must surely always be one of the most wonderful things that man has made, even though bigger buildings were soon to come. The Step Pyramid, as it is called, is the first work of the giant builders of the old world.

First of all a great chamber, 24 feet square and 77 feet down, was hollowed out of the solid rock, paved with granite, and divided into two rooms, whose walls were lined with blue-green tiles; and a sloping passage and stairway was cut, leading down through the rock to these rooms. Above the rooms masonry was carried up solid to the ground

level above, and then King Zeser built above the whole, first a great platform nearly 400 feet square and 38 feet high, then above that a second platform, 36 feet high and about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet smaller all round. Above this came a third tier, 34 feet high, and a little smaller again; a fourth, 32 feet high, and still diminishing; a fifth, 31 feet high; and, lastly, a sixth, 29 feet high, and the smallest of all. So the whole huge building rose in six monstrous steps nearly 200 feet into the air, to say nothing of the 77 feet down beneath the rock face on which it stood. It was the first idea of what was going to be very familiar in Egypt before long—the pyramid. I suppose that the three things that Egypt is best known by all over the world are the Pyramids, the Sphinx, and the Obelisks. Well, it was King Zeser whose Step Pyramid gave the first suggestion of the thing which, more than anything else, has made his country famous.

How did the idea come to him? I fancy it was not his own, but another man's, though the great king furnished the means for carrying it out, and has got the credit for it. Zeser had a very clever man in his service, who was called Imhotep. He seemed to know about everything: he was a physician, a writer of books, a philosopher, and an architect; and though the proverb says, "Jack-of-all-trades is master of none," it was not so with Imhotep. The man who planned the Step Pyramid so that it has stood for 5,000 years knew his business as architect, anyway; and if he was as good a doctor and writer as he was an architect, he must have been a wonder. Anyhow, there is no doubt that it was this universal genius who built King Zeser's great tomb for him, and though his master's name goes with the pyramid, the Egyptians themselves never forgot the man who really did the work. For centuries they looked back to him as *the* Wise Man of Egypt. Then gradually, from being only a wise man, they began to think that he must have been a god. Finally they built a fine temple to him, in the desert behind Memphis, and half of the households in Egypt had a little image in stone, or clay, or bronze, showing the Wise Man sitting at his studies, with a roll of papyrus across his knees. Hundreds of these little bronze figures of the man who became a god are still in existence, and nearly every museum has some of them. When the Greeks came to Egypt and found this wise man-god being worshipped, they fancied that he must be the same as their own physician-god, Asklepios or Æsculapius; and so the fame of old "Imouthes," which was the nearest that the Greeks could come to his Egyptian name, spread over all the ancient world wherever Greek learning went. It was a curious fate for the old architect, wasn't it?

Yet men have gained fame who have deserved it much less than the man who built the first great building of the world.

Once Imhotep and his king had shown the way, others were not long in following them. Less than a century later than Zeser, there came to the throne a famous king called Seneferu. Later I shall have to tell you about the great ships he built ; but he built more than ships, for the first two true pyramids in Egypt were of his building. Zeser's pyramid, you remember, was built in six great steps, five of which you can still see above ground ; but Seneferu improved upon this idea. He built up one of his pyramids in seven great stages, tower upon tower, each a little smaller than the one below it ; then he covered the whole seven towers with a sloping casing of smooth stone, going up to a sharp point at the top, so that the whole was perfectly smooth from top to bottom, and was a real pyramid as we understand such a thing. During all the centuries that have passed since King Seneferu made his great tomb, people have found it a handy quarry for ready-hewn stone. They have stripped off all the fine smooth limestone casing with which the seven towers were covered, and even three of the stages themselves have vanished ; but four of them still stand up white and shining in the desert sunlight at Medum, and make one of the most imposing relics of those far-off days and of a great king. At the foot of the pyramid, on the east side, there crouches a little stone temple where offerings used to be made to the king's spirit—the oldest Egyptian temple that we know of.

But Seneferu was not satisfied with the one pyramid. Every Egyptian believed that he had a sort of good genius, or double, which he called his *Ka*, and it had to be provided for as well as himself. So when King Seneferu was making his own tomb, he ordered another to be built for his *Ka*—not at Medum, where his own one was, but farther north, at Dahshur, south-west of Memphis. It was a vast building, far bigger than the king's own pyramid. Even to-day it is about 700 feet long on each of its four sides, and it was once more than 20 feet bigger each way, while its height is still 326 feet. In fact, though it is so little heard of, and tourists scarcely bother to go to see it, because it is off the beaten track, this pyramid of Seneferu's spirit is almost as big as the Great Pyramid, which is so famous. When we come to think about the Great Pyramid we shall see how many millions of tons of stone were used in the building of it. Seneferu's big pyramid for his *Ka* must have used up several millions of tons too ; and the wonderful thing, if you will only think of it, is that all those countless big blocks of stone, weighing anything from two or three up to forty



THE MOST FAMOUS BUILDING IN THE WORLD : THE GREAT PYRAMID.
In front is part of the so-called "Temple of the Sphinx," and between it and the Pyramid rises the head of the Sphinx.

or fifty tons apiece, were cut out of the quarry, shaped and squared and polished, not by men using tools of iron or steel, like our stone-hewers, but by men who were using, some of them soft copper chisels and saws, and some of them not even that, but only tools of flint. They weren't working on a contract with a time-limit, no doubt, though if their work was not ready when Pharaoh expected it to be, they would hear of it on the deafest side of their heads; but try to imagine the patience and the skill of the builders who did such work with such tools as they had. Workmen would say to-day that the thing couldn't be done without decent tools; but these old masons went and did it, and never thought twice of how marvellous a thing they were doing.

Then came the biggest step of all—so big, in fact, that the whole world, with 5,000 years to work upon, has never taken a bigger one. Zeser and Imhotep gave the thing a start with their Step Pyramid; Seneferu bettered their work with his two pyramids; Seneferu's son, Khufu, puts the crown on the whole business by building the most famous structure that the world has ever seen, or is ever likely to see.

The traveller, as he drives west from Cairo towards the desert, sees three seemingly small triangular shapes silhouetted against the western sky. Of course he knows at once what they are, for they are the most familiar shapes in all the world, and if he ever collected stamps in his boyhood he had them printed on his mind as the very essence of Egypt. But there is a curious disappointment at their actual appearance, and the first view of them is by no means impressive. "It does not take one's breath away, for instance, like a first sight of the Alps . . . or the outline of the Acropolis at Athens as one first recognizes it from the sea. The well-known triangular forms look small and shadowy, and are too familiar to be in any way startling." All the more disappointing is it to be told which of the three is the Great Pyramid, for it actually looks smaller than its companion, the Second, owing to the fact that the latter stands upon higher ground. Bit by bit, however, the vastness of the thing that you are seeing begins to grow upon you, and the final impression of its majesty comes with a rush as you stand in its shadow. "When at last the edge of the desert is reached, and the long sand-slope climbed, and the rocky platform gained, and the Great Pyramid in all its unexpected bulk and majesty towers close above one's head, the effect is as sudden as it is overwhelming. It shuts out the sky and the horizon. It shuts out all the other pyramids. It shuts out everything but the sense of awe and wonder."

Probably the first impressions are two. First, the ruggedness of the Pyramid. Instead of the smooth little model that your postage stamps offered you, here is a great, rough mass of giant blocks, which look as if Titans had piled them together to make a ladder by which to scale heaven. No doubt you have read how the Pyramid still kept its smooth outer casing of dazzling limestone until something like 500 years ago, when the Caliphs, partly in their eagerness to hunt for the treasure that they were sure lay concealed within the mass, partly because they found the beautifully hewn stone far more convenient than any quarry, stripped it off; but it is one thing to read and another to see. "The rugged, rock-like aspect of that giant staircase takes us by surprise nevertheless. Nor does it look like a partial ruin either. It looks as if it had been left unfinished, and as if the workmen might be coming back to-morrow morning." The other impression is the wonderful colour of the huge mass. Ages of exposure to the blazing sun of Egypt have soaked the warm limestone in liquid gold, and in some lights the mighty stairway looks like the golden ladder of Jacob's dream. By and by you will begin to settle down to facts about it; for a little you can do nothing but wonder how a man should ever dream of such a thing, and how, having dreamed of it, he should ever have found other men capable of carrying out his vision.

But now here are the facts about the Great Pyramid. It was built by, or rather for, the famous Pharaoh Khufu, who was the son of the shipbuilding Pharaoh, Seneferu, and who reigned at least 5,000 years ago—some would say more than 6,000. Each of its sides still measures 755 feet in length, and before the outer casing was stripped off, measured 20 feet more. The slanting line from each angle up to the peak of the Pyramid measures 612 feet long, and the height of the little platform on the top above the ground is 451 feet. When the Pyramid was new, this little platform was covered by a huge capstone which made the height 481 feet. The actual area that the whole building covers is about 570,000 square feet. The weight of the stones of which the mass is built is about six million tons. But all these figures really tell us very little, and perhaps only bewilder us. You have to come to comparisons to get any idea of what the Great Pyramid really means. Take that 570,000 square feet of ground which it covers. On that ground you could pack St. Peter's, Rome, St. Paul's, London, the Duomo of Florence, York Minster, and Westminster Abbey—five of the greatest buildings in the world. When you had done it, you would still have some room to spare. Canterbury

Cathedral would be just too big to fill the extra space, but Lichfield would go in quite comfortably. Some of us have stood upon the top of St. Paul's and seen the golden cross overhead at its height of 365 feet. The platform of the Pyramid would still tower 86 feet above the cross of St. Paul's, while the peak of the original capstone would have been 116 feet higher than the cross.

If you could pull the Pyramid down and break up the stones into sizes handy for building as we build now, you could build a town to hold 120,000 people out of it ; and if you could cut its blocks into handy stones a foot square, and put these end to end in a line, your line would go two-thirds round the world at the Equator.

All this tells us something of the size of this amazing building, which was reared in what seems to us almost the dawn of time, and by men who had no cranes, no engines, no mechanical appliances of any sort to help them, but had to do all the work and raise the huge blocks of stone, some of them from forty to fifty tons in weight, simply by the help of the inclined plane, and the lever, and sturdy human muscle. But we begin to wonder still more when we see the fineness with which the work is done. It looks like the work of giants, but it has none of the coarseness of giants' work. One of our engineering firms used to tell us that its bicycles were "made like a watch"—well, the Great Pyramid is made like a watch. Nearly fifty years ago Sir Flinders Petrie spent months at Gizeh measuring every detail of the Pyramid with the most delicate instruments of precision that modern skill could provide him with. When he had done, he said that some of the work of these ancient builders, who had no such instruments to help them, was "equal to optician's work, but on a scale of acres instead of inches." A modern surveyor could scarcely improve upon the skill with which the 755 foot sides of the Pyramid have been laid down. "The errors," says Petrie, "could be covered by placing one's thumb on them." And the great blocks of the casing which still remain are so perfectly squared and so finely joined that the film of mortar at the joint is scarcely visible, so that, if it is to be shown in a photograph, the line of the joint has to be blackened with a piece of charcoal. Indeed, the more one looks at their work, the more one feels that what these old builders of 5,000 years ago didn't know about building can scarcely have been worth knowing.

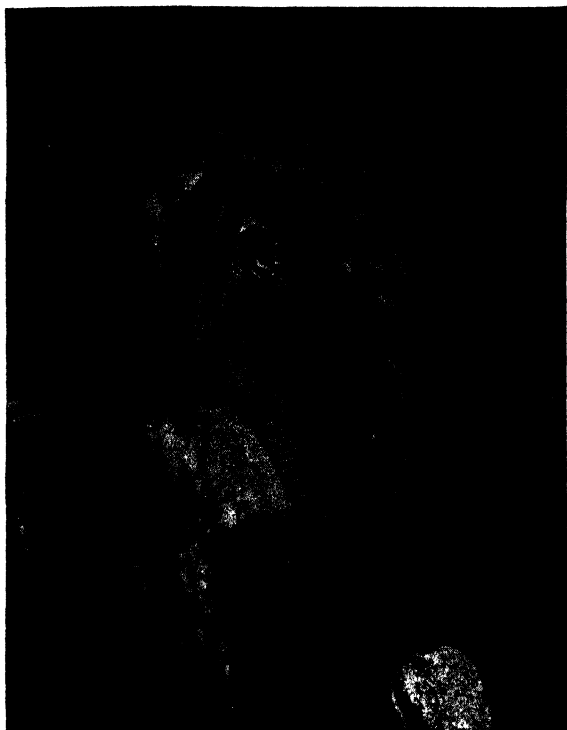
Within the great mass of stone the most striking thing, in spite of the fine work of the so-called "Queen's Chamber" and the Grand Gallery, is the disproportion between the vast bulk of solid stone over and around you, and the comparatively tiny chambers which

are guarded by it, and which seem no more than mite tracks in a cheese. Everything tells you that what was sought for here was not beauty, though there is beauty in the Pyramid, nor fineness of work, though the fineness of it, in spite of its severe plainness, could scarcely be bettered, but simply security. All else was nothing compared with that. To keep the secret of Khufu's tomb secure this mountain of stone was piled aloft, the dark and narrow passages contrived through its bulk, the portcullises and plug-blocks placed to bar the passages, once the king was laid within to his rest. And it all failed, and did not save the body of the great king from the hands of the spoilers for more than a century or two. Ages before Caliph Mamoun broke through into the passages in search of gold and jewels, or Captain Caviglia found a better pathway than the barbarous breach that Mamoun had battered through the stonework, old Egyptian tomb-robbers, who knew their business better than either the Caliph or the Captain, had found their way to the heart of the mystery of the Great Pyramid, and scattered the dust of the greatest builder of the world to the desert winds and sands.

" Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops."

So runs Byron's doggerel verse. And yet, though Cheops' dust may be scattered, his memory bids fair to last as long as his great tomb shall stand—and that seems likely to be as long as the everlasting hills. An old legend says that in the Middle Ages one of the Caliphs took the fancy that an evil spirit lived in the Third Pyramid, and set to work to pull it down, so as to rid himself of the fiend. Well, the Third Pyramid is by far the smallest of the Gizeh group—a mere trifle, not much more than 200 feet high; but after the Caliph's workmen had toiled for months, and made very little difference to the Pyramid, he concluded that he had had enough of it, and left the evil spirit to enjoy his house undisturbed. To-day you would scarcely know that the attempt had been made.

Yet, though it may seem to us that time has made little or no difference to the Pyramids, you have to remember that what you are now seeing is only a fraction of what was once there to see. The Pyramid is only the bare and stripped tomb of the man who built it, and the loss of its smooth limestone casing is the least of the losses it has suffered. If you had seen the Great Pyramid in the days of its glory, it would have been a very different sight from that which you now see in its gaunt and haggard majesty. For it was then the centre



A GREAT BUILDER PHARAOH : KHAFRA, WHO BUILT THE
SECOND PYRAMID.

of a perfect city of the dead. At its base, on the east side, crouched a noble temple, gay with coloured sculpture and crimson banners, where offerings were made, day by day, to the spirit of the great king. East of it, again, three smaller pyramids, lying in the shadow of the great tomb, marked the resting-places of the ladies of Khufu's family ; while to the west stretched street after street of great square, flat-topped tombs, where the nobles of the court slept in death beside the great king whom they had served in life. East from the pyramid-temple, a great paved causeway ran down to the lower ground, which was covered in flood-time with the water of the inundation, and at the foot of the causeway stood a smaller temple, with a quay in front

of it. Here, during the time of the inundation, came the barges of the priests and worshippers of the dead king, and from this portico-temple, with its water-gate, the long procession wound up the paved way to the stately service in the larger building under the shadow of the Pyramid. Nothing is left of all this now but the vast bulk of the bare tomb itself, a few fragments of the pyramid-temple, and the ruined rows of courtiers' tombs ; but one can still fancy what the Gizeh plateau must have looked like when the worship, not of Khufu only, but of his successors who built the Second and Third Pyramids, was still observed with all the splendour of the old kingdom of Egypt. All this, only about a century or so after the first attempt at a pyramid was made by Zeser and Imhotep, and a century and a half after the very first stone structure was built. How was it all done, and done as a matter of course ? For there were other pyramids which, though less than Khufu's, were not very much less.

One used to hear talk about some wonderful mechanical appliances which the ancient Egyptians possessed, and of which we have lost the secret ; but since M. Legrain rebuilt a great part of the temple of Karnak simply by using the old means of the inclined plane, the lever, and the muscles of the Egyptian fellahin, one hears less of these marvels of machinery, which never existed. On the other hand, dreadful pictures were drawn of the poor slaves who were driven to their task under the lash, and sweated and groaned and died around the vast blocks of stone which the vanity of one man forced them to heave aloft as a monument to his pride. The Great Pyramid has been one of the stock instances of "Man's inhumanity to man." Well, all that is just about as far from the truth as the machinery idea was.

More than 2,000 years ago the old Greek globe-trotter, Herodotus, told the world how the thing was done, if people would only have taken the pains to understand what he said. He told us that the work took 100,000 men for twenty years, working for three months at a time, and some of our modern scholars have figured out how the job could be divided among such a host, and have come to the conclusion that it could be done perfectly in the time, without burdening anybody. The fact that the work was only for three months each year means that the men were only called up when the water of the inundation was out upon their land, and they couldn't work on their own farms. So that actually, instead of crushing his people with cruel servitude, Khufu really provided 100,000 of them each year in their slack time with a job which kept them until they could get on the

land again. In fact, the building of the Great Pyramid was the first and greatest piece of work ever put in hand to solve the unemployment question.

As for the tears, and blood, and sorrow, no doubt there were accidents, and perhaps some loss of life—nothing else could be expected on such a huge job, where such an army was employed. But you may be sure that there was no cruelty, for it was not slave labour that built the Pyramid, but the willing labour of Khufu's own peasantry, who felt that they were helping themselves as well as serving their king. We know enough of the Egyptian now to understand that he was one of the kindest and cheeriest of folk; and if you want a picture of the building of the Pyramids, you may wipe out the old blood-and-tears one, and put in its place a great cheery army of workers, laughing and singing, as the Egyptian workman does still at his task, as they rowed the stone-barges across the flooded Nile, dragged the sledges up the long causeway, or laid the blocks in place on the growing mountain of stone. One thing you can wonder at, for it is worth your wonder—the skill which marshalled that great army so that each man had his job, and no man was in the way of his neighbour. Without that, all the strength and willingness in the world would have gone for nothing, or only caused the greater smash when disaster came. One of our scholars was talking recently to an Egyptian workman about the building of the Great Pyramid. "If it is an order," said this descendant of Pharaoh's old workmen, "we will build you a pyramid to-day."

CHAPTER X

SOME FAIRY TALES OF THE OLD WORLD

WHAT sort of folk were the men who did these great feats of building of which I have been telling you ? Naturally you think of them as being something like the work they did—as being men who were almost a little more than men, stronger than us puny folk of to-day, very serious, and perhaps a little grim. When Miss Edgeworth, the Irish novelist, visited Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, the first thing she said to him, as she saw the great man standing at the door of his romantic house, was: “Everything about you is exactly what one ought to have had wit enough to dream !” A great romancer, she evidently felt, ought to live in romantic surroundings and to look romantic. But there are very few who come up to the standard which Miss Edgeworth set. Most of the world’s great folk are just like ordinary people when you come to know them, with the same cares and troubles and sorrows as their fellow-men, and all their greatness does not save them from the same inconveniences and worries that you and I have to put up with.

Well, just so it was with these great men of the old world, who have left us these wonderful buildings at which men have marvelled ever since they were built. They were strong and clever ; but, after all, they were human beings like ourselves, and not all their greatness could keep them at times from being weary and out of temper, and sick of everything. You would imagine, for instance, that the great Pharaoh Khufu, who built the Great Pyramid, would be something like his own work, that everything else and everybody else would look very small in his presence, and that he would always, so to speak, be on his high horse. A king who could command men to do a thing like that, and have it done without a question, surely he could never know what it was to be disappointed or disgusted with life. But the curious thing is that one of the very few things that we do know about this great king is that he had his dull days just like the rest of us, when he was sick of the whole business of being a king, and

when everything seemed flat and stale and unprofitable to him, and he craved, just like a peevish child, for something new. It was another great and wise king, you remember, who said that all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and would have liked the sun to turn round and go from west to east, instead of east to west, if it were only for a change ; and Khufu, though he was a far greater king than Solomon, sometimes felt just the same as the Hebrew king.

Something like three-quarters of a century ago an English lady, Miss Westcar, was travelling in Egypt, and bought an old Egyptian papyrus from some of the people who trade in such things. I don't suppose that she had any idea of the value of the old roll of tattered brown papyrus that she had bought ; but she gave it to one who had—the great German scholar Lepsius—and the roll is now one of the most precious treasures of the museum at Berlin. When Lepsius came to examine it, he found that it was a collection of old fairy stories which had been written down, perhaps about the time of Abraham—say, 4,000 years ago—but which referred to times far older than Abraham's time, in fact to the time when the Great Pyramid was being built, and which name the great Pharaoh Khufu. Indeed, Khufu is in a kind of a way the hero of the papyrus, or rather the stories which are written in it all centre round him and are told for his diversion. And it is from this old roll that we know how even the greatest builder of the world had his bad days, when he was bored to death with all the splendours and ceremonies of his gorgeous court, and sick of being a king, and seeing courtiers bowing down before him, and called, for all the world like a spoiled child, for some one to tell him a good fairy story to pass the time.

Unfortunately the beginning of the roll has been lost, and when we can make out what is going on in the royal court, King Khufu is just praising the prince who has told him the first story ; but we know what must have gone before from another roll which describes how Khufu's father, Seneferu, almost as famous a man as his son, got so bored at a meeting of his Privy Council that, when all the councillors had gone, he sent for them all back again to ask them if there was not a man among them who could tell him of any one that had some good stories to tell to pass the time. Khufu, apparently, had felt much the same, only he asked his own sons to tell the stories instead of calling his council together. So now, let us hear one or two of the stories which amused the man who built the Great Pyramid 5,000 years ago.

Then Prince Baufra rose up to speak, and said : " I am going to tell your Majesty about a wonder which happened in the days of your

father, the late Pharaoh, Seneferu, and which was wrought by the chief reciter, Zazamankh.

"Once upon a time, when King Seneferu, of happy memory, was feeling bored, His Majesty called together the royal household, in order to seek something which might cheer up his heart. Nobody could think of anything, so the king said: 'Hasten, and bring to me the chief reciter, Zazamankh.' Behold, it was done on the spot. His Majesty said: 'Zazamankh, my dear fellow, I have called together the royal household to see if they could find out anything to cheer me up; but they are a lot of good-for-nothings.' Zazamankh answered him: 'Let your Majesty condescend to go down to the lake of the Royal Pleasance, and to have a barge manned for yourself with all the pretty girls of the royal harem. Your Majesty's heart will be diverted as you see them swinging to the oar; moreover, when you see the beautiful nooks of the lake, when you behold the lovely lawns which border it, and its pleasant banks, then the heart of your Majesty will grow light.'

"'The very thing,' said His Majesty. 'I am going boating, and this is to be the fashion of the thing. Bring to me twenty paddles of ebony, inlaid with gold, whose blades shall be of *sekheb* wood inlaid with vermilion; bring me also twenty of the prettiest maidens, with fine figures and beautiful hair; bring me, moreover, twenty fishing-nets, and let the girls wear them for robes.' It was done according to all that His Majesty commanded. The girls rowed to and fro, and the heart of His Majesty grew glad as he watched them rowing.

"But the loom of the oar of the steerswoman caught in her long braided hair, and knocked her new fish-pendant of malachite into the water. Then she ceased her rowing-song (with which the rest of the crew kept time), she stopped rowing, and her companions on that side of the boat stopped singing and rowing also. Then said His Majesty: 'Why are you not rowing?' They answered: 'Our leader is silent, and is not rowing.' His Majesty said to the girl: 'Why do you not row?' She said: 'My new fish-pendant of malachite has fallen into the water.' His Majesty said: 'Never mind, go on rowing, and I shall give you another as good.' But she replied: 'I want my own ornament, and not another just as good.' Then said His Majesty: 'Hasten and bring to me the chief reciter, Zazamankh.' He was brought immediately, and His Majesty said to him: 'Zazamankh, my dear fellow, I have done as you said, and the heart of my Majesty was diverted at the sight of these girls rowing; but, lo and behold! the fish-pendant of new malachite belonging to one of the little dears

has fallen into the water. Thereupon she has fallen silent, she has ceased to row, and she has spoilt the rowing of her companions. I said to her: "Why are you not rowing?" And she said to me: "My new fish-pendant of malachite has fallen into the water." I said to her: "Never mind, go on rowing, and I shall give you another as good." But she answered me: "I want my own ornament, my very own, and not another just as good."

"Then the chief reciter Zazamankh said his say of magic. He raised up the one half of the water of the lake, and piled it up on the other half, and he found the fish-pendant lying upon a potsherd. He picked it up and gave it to its owner. Now the water was twelve cubits deep in the middle, and when he had folded it back it reached twenty-four cubits. Then he said his say of magic, and put back the water as it was before. Therefore His Majesty passed a happy day, with all the royal household, and he rewarded the chief reciter Zazamankh with all sorts of good things. Lo, this is the wonder which happened in the time of thy father, the king Seneferu, of happy memory, the wonder which was wrought by the chief reciter Zazamankh, the wizard."

His Majesty King Khufu then said: "Let there be offered to the majesty of King Seneferu, of happy memory, an offering of a thousand loaves, a hundred jugs of beer, one ox, and two measures of incense; also, let there be given to the chief reciter Zazamankh, the wizard, one cake, one pint of beer, and one measure of incense, because I have seen the proof of his learning." And it was done as His Majesty commanded.

Then the king's son, the Prince Hordadef, stood up to speak, and he said: "Hitherto, thy Majesty has heard only the account of wonders which the folks of bygone days have known; but nobody can tell whether they are true or false. I can let your Majesty see a wizard who belongs to your own time, and whom you do not know." His Majesty said: "Who, then, is this, my son Hordadef?" The king's son Hordadef answered: "There is a townsman whose name is Dedi, and who dwells at Ded-Seneferu. He is a man of 110 years; but he still eats his 500 loaves of bread, a whole haunch of beef, and drinks his 100 jugs of beer." (The old gentleman, one sees, had a fair appetite, in spite of his age.) "He knows how to stick on again a head which has been cut off; he knows how to make a lion follow him with its halter trailing on the ground; moreover, he knows the locks of the secret chambers of the sanctuary of Thoth." Now the majesty of King Khufu was always seeking for himself the locks of

the sanctuary of Thoth, in order to make for himself the like for his Pyramid.

Then said His Majesty : " Do thou thyself, my son Hordadef, bring him to me." So ships were made ready for the king's son Hordadef, and he sailed up-river to Ded-Seneferu. Now, when the ships were moored to the bank, he disembarked, and was carried in a sedan-chair of ebony, whose poles were of *sesenem* wood overlaid with gold. Now, when he was come to the abode of Dedi, the sedan-chair was set down on the ground. He rose up to salute the wizard, and found him lying on a mat at the threshold of his house, with one slave scratching his head, and another rubbing his feet. Prince Hordadef pays the old magician a high-flown compliment, rather difficult for us to understand, upon his great age, and then comes to business.

" Greetings," he says, " reverend sir ! I am come hither in haste to summon thee with a message from my honoured father, Khufu ; thou shalt eat of the best that the king can give, the rations of those that serve him, and, thanks to him, thou shalt arrive at last, in a good old age, at thy fathers who are in the tomb." Dedi answered : " In peace, in peace, Hordadef, beloved royal son of his father ! May thy father, Khufu, honoured man, praise thee, and may he appoint thy place before all the ancients ! Greetings, king's son ! "

Then Prince Hordadef held out his hand to him, and helped him to rise ; he went to the river-side with him, giving him his arm. Said Dedi : " Let a barge be given me to bring my scholars and my books." They gave him two vessels with their crews ; but Dedi himself sailed in the barge on which was the king's son Hordadef.

Now, when he was arrived at court, as soon as the Prince Hordadef entered the presence to make his report to his honoured Majesty, King Khufu, King of the Two Egypts, he said : " Sire, my master (Life ! Health ! Strength !), I have brought Dedi." His Majesty said : " Hasten, and bring him in." And when His Majesty had entered the audience-chamber of Pharaoh, Dedi was presented to him. Said His Majesty : " Why have I never seen thee before, Dedi ? " Dedi answered : " A man can only come when he is called. My sovereign has called me, and behold I am come." His Majesty said : " Is it true, as they say of you, that you know how to stick on again a head that has been cut off ? " Dedi answered : " Yes, my master, it is true." Then said the king : " Bring me a prisoner of those who are lying under sentence in the prison." " No, no," said Dedi. " Not on a man, sire, my master. Let the thing be commanded to be done rather on some of the august cattle of the king."

Then they brought him a goose, and cut off its head ; the goose was placed at the right hand of the hall, and its head at the left hand of the hall. Dedi spoke his spell ; the goose got up and waddled, its head did likewise, and when the head and the body met the goose stood up and cackled. Next a duck was brought, and the like was done unto it. His Majesty caused a bull to be brought, and its head was smitten off to the ground. Dedi spoke his spell, and the ox stood up behind him, while its halter fell to the ground.

Then said King Khufu : " Is it true, as they say, that you know the locks of the secret chambers of the sanctuary of Thoth ? " " May it please thee, my lord, O king," said Dedi, " I know not the number of them, but I know the place where they are." " And where is that ? " said His Majesty. Then said Dedi : " There is a chest of flint in the chamber named ' The Record ' in Heliopolis ; they are in the chest." " Bring me, then, the locks which are in the chest," said the king. But Dedi answered : " Sire, my master, behold, it is not I who shall bring them unto you." " Who, then, shall bring them ? " said the king. And Dedi said : " The eldest of the three children who shall be born of Ruddidet shall bring them." " Tell me, then," said His Majesty, " who is she, this Ruddidet ? " And Dedi answered and said : " She is the wife of a priest of Ra (the sun-god), Lord of Sakhebu, who shall bear three children unto Ra, the Lord of Sakhebu. And he hath told her that they shall exercise this excellent office (*i.e.* be kings) of this whole land, and that the eldest shall also be high priest in Heliopolis."

From this point the old story begins to take the colour of the Bible story of Herod attempting to find out from the Wise Men the whereabouts of the new-born King of the Jews. Khufu becomes eagerly anxious to know all about these future kings of Egypt—one suspects for the same reason as made Herod eager to find out about Jesus.

Then (the story goes on) His Majesty's heart grew sad at this news. And Dedi answered and said : " Pray, why so sad, my lord, O king ? Is it because of these three children ? Lo, then, I say this unto thee. Thy son (shall reign), his son, and then one of them." (Just as a Hebrew prophet might say to a repentant king that the evil shall not happen in his time.) Then said the king : " When shall the children be born ? " " They shall be born," said Dedi, " on the fifteenth day of the first month of winter." His Majesty said : " She dwelleth in the region of the Canal of the Two Fishes. I myself would fain go thither and worship Ra, Lord of Sakhebu." (Herod again.) And

Dedi said : " Behold, I shall cause the water to stand four cubits deep over the region of the Canal of the Two Fishes." (So that, of course, there might be plenty of water to float the royal barge.)

Then His Majesty betook himself to his palace. And he said : " Cause Dedi to dwell in the house of the royal son Hordadef, that he may abide with him. Appoint his rations at a thousand loaves of bread, a hundred jugs of beer, one ox, and a hundred bundles of leeks." And it was done according to all that His Majesty commanded.

The scene now shifts to the house of the priest of Ra. When the time came for the children to be born, the sun-god sent forth four goddesses, Isis, Nephthys, Meskhent, and Heqt, that they might be nurses to Ruddidet and her children. Khnum, the creator-god, went with them, and they travelled as dancing-girls, with Khnum as their porter. Then, when they had attended to Ruddidet and her three babies, they came forth again, and said to the priest, Ra-user : " Let thy heart be glad, Ra-user, behold, three children are born unto thee." And Ra-user said unto them : " My mistresses, what can I do for you ? I pray you give this one measure of barley to your porter, and take it away yourselves as payment." So Khnum loaded himself with the barley, and the four goddesses went forth from the house of Ra-user, and he still believed them to be but dancing-girls.

But when they had gone so far upon their way Isis said unto the other three goddesses : " What foolishness is this, that we have been to Ruddidet, and yet have wrought no wonder for these children that we may report to their father Ra, who sent us ? " So they made three royal crowns, and they placed them in the barley. Then they caused storm and rain to come up in the sky, so that they might have a reason for going back to the house ; and they said to Ra-user : " We pray you, let us lay the barley here in a locked-up chamber until we come again." So they laid the barley in a locked-up chamber.

Now after a fortnight had come and gone, Ruddidet went about her household duties. And she said unto her maid-servant : " Is the house all in order ? " And the maid said : " It is all in order, save for pots, which cannot be had." And Ruddidet said : " Wherefore, pray, cannot pots be had ? " And the handmaid answered : " Because they are in the chamber where lieth the barley belonging to the dancing-girls, and it is under their seal." Then said Ruddidet : " Go down, and fetch some of this barley, and Ra-user will make it up to them when he cometh back again."

So the maid-servant went and opened the chamber, and lo, she heard in the chamber the sound of music and singing, dancing and

rejoicing, and all that is done in honour of a king. She went, therefore, and told Ruddidet what she had heard. And Ruddidet went round the chamber, but she could not discern the place wherein the music was being made. Then she laid her ear to the corn-bin, and behold the music was there. So she put the bin into a chest, put the chest into another locker, corded it up with a rawhide rope, put it into another chamber, and shut the door. Then Ra-user came home from the field, and Ruddidet told him of this matter. Then he rejoiced greatly at the honour that was come upon them, and they sate them down, and made merry.

But it fell out after certain days that Ruddidet was wroth with her handmaid about a matter, and had her punished with a beating. Then said the handmaid unto the people that were in the house : " Should she do this unto me—she who has borne three kings ? I will go and tell it unto the majesty of King Khufu." So she went, and as she went she came upon her eldest brother by her mother binding yarn of flax on the threshing-floor. Then said he unto her : " Whither away, little maiden ? " And she recounted to him her story. But her brother said unto her : " And so thou hast the face to come even unto me, and I am to take part in this betrayal ! " Then he took a bundle of flax to her, and gave her a grievous blow. Then the handmaid went to fetch her a handful of water to bathe her bruises, and a crocodile seized her.

But her brother went to tell it to Ruddidet, and he found her sitting with her head bowed upon her knee, and her heart was exceeding heavy. And he said unto her : " Why art thou so troubled ? " And she said : " It is this slut who hath grown up in the house. Lo, she is even now gone forth, saying : ' I will go to reveal it ' ! " And her brother hung his head, and he said : " My lady, she came and told her tale to me, and I dealt her a grievous blow. And she went to draw her some water, and a crocodile seized her."

And then, just here, at the point where the old story-teller is about to tell us, no doubt, how the wicked schemes of Khufu against the children were thus frustrated, the provoking papyrus breaks off, and the rest of the story is lost for ever, unless another manuscript should turn up to provide us with the conclusion. There can be little question that the conclusion of the tale told how the children were preserved, and how at last they came, one after the other, to reign over the land of Egypt, as Dedi had prophesied. For, indeed, this second of our fairy stories is the earliest of all instances of a kind of book that we have come to know very well—the novel with a purpose. I have

no doubt that it was first written probably not very long after the end of the great Fourth Dynasty of Egypt, the Dynasty of the Pyramid-builders, to explain how it was that at the close of this great line of kings the priests of Ra at Heliopolis got up a revolution, and set a new line of kings, of their own choosing, on the throne. The kings of the new line are priestly kings, who make a great display of their devotion to Ra, the sun-god, and give great endowments to the temples, and are generally, as the Scottish nobleman said of David, the saintly king of Scotland, "Sair sancts to the Crown." So the priests made up this fine story of how the first three kings of the line were really sons of the sun-god himself. The curious thing is that the story caught on, and became the official explanation of the actual divine birth, not of these Pharaohs only, but of all the Pharaohs of Egypt. From this point onwards each Pharaoh assumes as his foremost title, along with the Hawk, Reed, and Hornet titles, the name "Son of Ra."

Here, then, we have two of the very oldest stories in all the world ; for, even if the actual papyrus in which they are written only dates from the time of Abraham, or perhaps even later, the stories themselves must be far older than that. Probably they are not very much less than 5,000 years old. So they are the ancestors of all the novels in the world, and especially of the great class of fairy or wonder tales which have delighted so many people in all lands and times. It is fitting that the first of that great family which gave us *The Arabian Nights* should see the light in the same land, and probably not far from the same spot, as that in which the scenes of *The Arabian Nights* are laid. The first tale reminds one curiously of the Bible narrative of the piling up of the waters of the Red Sea under the wonder-working rod of Moses, though the occasion of Zazamankh's little miracle is so trivial in comparison with the deliverance of a nation. National characteristics seem ineffaceable, and it is recorded that when the famous ruler of Egypt, Mehemet Ali, in the nineteenth century, found himself in the same state of boredom as Seneferu and Khufu, four and a half millenniums before him, he had recourse to precisely the same remedy as that which proved so effectual in the case of Seneferu. There is no record, however, of any miracle having happened in the course of his voyage.

A famous Egyptian scholar and excavator has said of these and other similar old tales, that "it would not be difficult from these papyrus tales to start an historical dictionary of the elements of fiction : a kind of analysis that should be the death of much of the venerable

stock-in-trade." Even in the second of our stories you see the truth of this, for here, in the four goddesses who preside at the birth of Ruddidet's three babies, we have the fairy godmothers who meet us again and again in so many different guises in our own fairy tales. Perhaps we may meet them again later on in our story of Egypt, for they occur in more than one of the stories of later ages, and with them quite a number of the other figures of our fiction. But, after all, perhaps the most interesting and important thing in these ancient tales is just the fact that they help us to realize that the great men of the old world, who often seem so far away from us—mere puppets of some dry historian—were very much like ourselves, men who got "fed up" with sitting on thrones, with courtiers kissing the ground before their feet, and craved for an interesting story to be told them, just as Scheherazade's Sultan did, and as we do ourselves now and again. I think that Khufu is far more real to me, and far more understandable, when I hear him asking his sons to spin him a yarn, and when I see him getting anxious about the three babies that are to take the throne from his descendants, than when I see him ordering the erection of the Great Pyramid. Indeed, is not the true purpose of all history to make the past live again before us of the present? Anything that can do that, as these stories do, is really far more precious, as a help to knowledge, than all the dry old facts and dates in the world.

CHAPTER XI

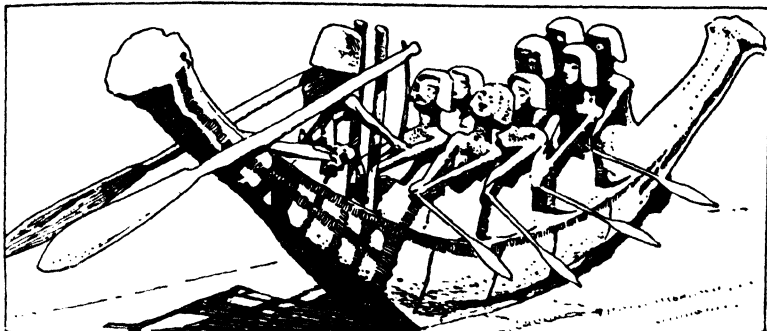
EGYPTIAN SHIPS, SAILORMEN, AND EXPLORERS FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO

NOT so very many years ago the idea that most people had of that wonderful world of the Ancient East was that it was divided up, so to speak, into a lot of water-tight compartments, in each of which one nation lived, keeping itself jealously to itself, and seldom having anything to do with its neighbours unless to pick a quarrel with them and try to conquer them. We used to imagine that the folks of those old times knew next to nothing about the world around them, and that it was only about 400 years ago that the great adventurers began to explore unknown lands and seas. Especially it used to be thought that those strange folk, the Ancient Egyptians, were a sort of cloistered people, like the Chinese, or perhaps more like the Tibetans, who lived shut up in their long narrow valley, nursing a strange dark religion which nobody could understand, but which largely consisted in the worshipping of beasts like bulls, crocodiles, and cats. We might have known, I daresay, if we had only thought about it, that human curiosity, if nothing else, would never have allowed people to live boxed up like that, and that a nation which could do such wonderful things as the building of the pyramids and temples of Egypt was not likely to be so stupid in other things as we imagined ; but we did not think about that, and were content to take the travellers' tales of long ago, as if there were nothing more behind them.

Nowadays we are beginning to know better. We have learned that, instead of the nations of that old world living shut up within their own borders, folks were travelling over the whole of that old world in every direction, and that, indeed, travelling was often a great deal safer than it is in those same countries at the present day. We know that 5,000 years ago the Egyptians were building ships considerably bigger than those in which Drake sailed round the world, and were regularly sailing on trading voyages over the eastern Mediterranean ; while an Egyptian fleet doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and sailed



FAREWELL TO THE ENCHANTED ISLAND



AN EGYPTIAN "EIGHT" OF ABRAHAM'S TIME.

Model boat from a Twelfth Dynasty tomb.

(From Garstang's "*Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt*." Constable and Co.)

right round Africa, from the Red Sea back to the mouth of the Nile, 2,000 years before Bartolommeo Diaz or Vasco da Gama was heard of. We have learned that passports and safe-conducts were as regularly, though perhaps not as often, issued more than 3,000 years ago, as they are to-day; and just the other day the explorers who are digging up the ruins of the old city of Ur, where Abraham lived before he came to Palestine, found out that in Abraham's time, nearly 4,000 years ago, the priests of the moon-god of Ur were doing what Cook's and the other big tourist agencies have only learned to do in our own time, for they issued circular notes to the servants whom they sent out over the East on temple business, so that they could draw supplies wherever they went, and didn't need to carry provisions for months with them. I want in this chapter to tell you a little about the story of how some of this was done, and especially about the ships and sailors of Egypt, and the brave men who travelled, at Pharaoh's command, right into the heart of darkest Africa, where we imagined that no civilized man had ever been until Livingstone and Stanley led the way in days which some of us can still remember.

First of all, let me tell you a little about the Egyptian ships of those old days, and the men who sailed in them. You may have seen pictures of some Egyptian ships, and wondered how those queer things, shaped more like a slice of melon than anything else, ever managed to float at all without capsizing. But if you could see one of the old galleys of the Pharaohs and a modern racing cutter lying high and dry side by side, you would wonder to see how closely the racer of to-day

measuring along her gun-deck ; along her keel she was 19 feet shorter than the old boat.

Now you can try to imagine the Egyptian sailors of those early days setting sail in ships like these, though mostly much smaller, to explore the wonderful new world that lay all around them. You can see them in the pictures, with their long, graceful overhang at bow and stern, the stern often curving up over the steersman's head, and carved and painted to represent a lotus flower, the big square sail bulging overhead, when the breeze was fair, and the long lines of creeping oars beating the sea into foam when the wind fell or was ahead. By the way, they had learned the idea of the tripod mast ages before we began to put it into our Dreadnoughts. Of course, it was all very new and very strange to them at first, and a voyage to Syria or down the Red Sea was as much a piece of daring as the greatest venture of Queen Elizabeth's day. Still they went, and bit by bit they began to get used to the business. The cedar cargoes came regularly to the Nile mouths ; the timid mariners began to creep out of sight of land, until at last they risked the run across to Crete, where the kings of Knossos were building great palaces and beginning to build fleets as well. Down the Red Sea the galleys ran to a wonderful land which they called "Punt," and sometimes "The Divine Land," and sometimes "The Land of Ghosts"; and when they came back they not only brought wonderful things—gold, and sweet-smelling gums, apes and leopards and giraffes, but they had still more wonderful yarns to tell of the things they had seen but couldn't bring back. You remember Kingsley's picture in *Westward Ho!* of John Oxenham swaggering about on the quay at Bideford and showing off his Spanish hat with the gorgeous quezal bird fastened by a golden clasp, and calling all the lads to join his ship and sail to the Spanish Main. Many an Egyptian John Oxenham came back from the Red Sea with tales of the Land of Ghosts that sometimes made his hearers shiver, and sometimes made them resolve that next voyage they would sail themselves, if they got the chance.

Strangely enough, one of these old sea-stories has come down to us. It is written on an old papyrus which is now in a Russian museum at Leningrad, and it is very strange to think that it is old enough to have been told to Abraham when he came down on that visit to Egypt which brought him so little credit. If you have ever read the story of Sindbad the Sailor, you will find the first idea of it in this four thousand year old yarn. It is told by an old sailor to his captain, a great Egyptian nobleman who has been in command of an expedition up the

Nile to equatorial Africa. The expedition has not been very successful, and the prince is very much in the blues as he lies in the galley cabin at Aswan and thinks of the poor report that he has to make to Pharaoh. His sailing-master, a regular weather-beaten old salt, comes in to report that the galley is safely moored, and seeing how down-spirited his chief is, he tries to cheer him up by telling him a story of his own past adventures, to show what hazards a man may go through and yet come out all right in the end. This is the substance of his story as it has come down to us.

I set sail for the royal mines (at Sinai) he says, and went down to the sea in a ship 200 feet by 65—(a regular *Mauretania* for those days). Therein were an hundred and twenty sailors of the pick of Egypt. They scanned the sea, they scanned the sky, and their hearts were as bold as lions. They were so weather-wise that they foretold a storm before it came, and a tempest when as yet it was not. All the same, a great storm burst while we were yet at sea ; we flew before the wind, and a great wave, eight cubits high, overwhelmed us. The ship foundered, and of them that were in it not one was saved ; but I drifted on a piece of wood, and was cast upon an island by a wave of the sea. There I spent three days with nothing but my own heart for my companion. I found there figs and vines, and all manner of fine leeks, with *neku*-fruit and cucumbers. There was abundance of fish and fowl, and I ate until I could eat no more. Then I made a fire-drill, lit a fire, and made a burnt-offering to the gods.

Then I heard a sound as of thunder, and the earth quaked. When I uncovered my face, behold a great serpent was drawing nigh. He was thirty cubits long (say 50 feet !), his beard was more than two cubits long, his body was overlaid with gold, and his eyebrows were of real lapis lazuli. As he coiled himself forward, I fell on my face before him, and he said to me : "Who hath brought thee hither, little one ? If thou dost not tell me who brought thee, I will make thee ashes in a moment." I answered : "Thou speakest, but I hear not ; I am before thee, but my senses have fled."

This wonderful monster, however, was as gentle as he was great. He took up the terrified sailor in his mouth, carried him to his lair as gently as a pet dog might carry a treasured Teddy-bear, and laid him down without a scratch. When he asked once more for an account of how the sailor had come, the poor man's wits had returned sufficiently for him to be able to tell what we have already heard. The tender-hearted monster comforted him. "Fear not, fear not, little one, and let not thy face be fallen because of what has happened to

thee. God hath preserved thee alive to bring thee to this Island of Spirits, in which are all good things. Thou shalt spend here four months ; then a ship shall come from the Residence " (Pharaoh's palace), " and thou shalt go with them to the Residence, and die in thine own town."

Then this royal serpent went on to tell his trembling listener how he had lived here with seventy-five other serpents, and a girl who had been cast on the isle. Then a shooting-star had fallen, and when the serpent, who had been at another part of the island, came home, he found nothing but a heap of ashes. " I almost died on their account," says the simple-hearted monster—you can almost see him wiping his eyes with that two-cubit long beard of his—" when I found them as one heap of corpses." The poor creature was evidently bored to death with his lonely greatness, and ready to talk to any one, even a stray Egyptian sailor, to break the monotony. Yet he was too kind-hearted to wish to keep his new-found companion a day longer than the fated time. " Be brave," he said, " and keep up thine heart. Then thou wilt embrace thy children, and kiss thy wife, and see thine house—that is best of all." The grateful castaway promised to recount to Pharaoh all the kindness that had been shown him, and to tell him of the greatness of this strange brother-monarch ; but when he offered to send ships laden with incense, and " all the precious things of Egypt," the serpent laughed. " Incense ! " he said ; " I am the Prince of Punt, and as for myrrh, it is my very own. Moreover, it shall happen that as soon as thou art gone away from this island, thou shalt never behold it more, for it shall become water."

At last the Egyptian ship arrived as the serpent had foretold, and when the sailor came to report its arrival to his kind host, he found that his news was already known. " Safely, safely home, little one," said the gentle monster ; " see thy children, and give me a good name in thy city. Lo, this is all that I ask of thee." So the castaway bade farewell to his deliverer, who loaded the ship with all the finest of the island's treasures. And when, after a prosperous voyage of two months' duration, the wanderer bowed in the presence of Pharaoh, and offered to him the gifts which he had brought from the magic island, the king thanked him before all his courtiers, and appointed him one of his own retainers.

Such is the first sailor's tale of those ancient days. It failed to comfort the prince to whom it was told, and who knew only too well that he had no treasure from a vanishing island with which to propitiate Pharaoh for the failure of the rest of his mission ; but it has

its own interest for us as the first of an innumerable company of wonder tales, and when you read it you can think of Sindbad from "Bas-sorah," and Lemuel Gulliver from Wapping, and Long John Silver from Bristol, and try to realize that they, and all such skilful drawers of the long-bow, look back to this old sailor of Abraham's time as the founder of their line.

But it was not only on the sea that the men of those old days were venturing, as they sought to find out the wonders of this great new world around them. The long galleys of Egypt passed the First Cataract of the Nile at Aswan by a ship-canal, and drove southwards before the steady north wind past Korosko, past Wady Halfa and the Second Cataract, even past the Fourth Cataract and Abu Hamed, till at last there were Egyptian settlements even as far south as Meroë, almost within hail of Khartum, and the ships toiled heavily north again, deep-laden with hides and ivory and ebony and gold-dust from the Sûdan. And when the galleys could not go, there were long caravans, not of camels, for the Egyptians did not yet know the wonderful ship of the desert, but of asses, with Egyptian spearmen and archers to guard them, and a great noble of the empire, one of the Barons of Elephantiné, riding ahead as caravan-leader, always pressing farther and farther into the heart of Africa, where the precious woods and fine ivory that the Egyptians loved came from, and where strange creatures and stranger men were to be met with.

These Barons of Elephantiné deserve to be remembered as the first great explorers of the Dark Continent, and we are only now finding out what daring things they did, and how much they knew that we have only found out ourselves within living memory. Just as in old days the Borders between England and Scotland were kept by great nobles of the two countries—the Wardens of the Marches—so 4,500 years ago the Lords of Elephantiné were Pharaoh's Wardens of the Marches between Egypt and the Sûdan. "Keepers of the Gate of the South," they were called, and more than one of them laid down his life in defence of his trust, or in the attempt to push the border of his master's empire farther south. Caravan-leading in those wild days was no business for a timid man, and even the spearmen and archers sometimes failed to daunt the savage Sûdanese tribesmen, as British rifles and machine-guns have failed to daunt them in our own time. More than one caravan vanished into the great, glaring southland, and never came back; and when that happened, then another of the bold soldier lords at Elephantiné would put on his quilted corselet and gird on his crooked sword, and march south,

with a long train of asses and spearmen, to find where his friends were lying dead, to revenge their death, and to bring their bodies back, above all, for that decent burial without which their hope of eternal life would be small indeed. Some of them have left us on the cliffs of their native place the story of these dangerous journeys, so that we know even the names of the men who died, and the names of those who brought the dead men back to Egypt again, and punished their slayers.

What is perhaps the most interesting story of all is told us mainly not by the explorer himself, but by a letter which his Pharaoh, then a little boy of eight years old, wrote to his brave subject when he came back again from the south. Herkhuf, the baron to whom the letter was written, was so proud of it that he had a copy of it carved in the rock at the door of his tomb at Elephantiné, and there it can still be seen, to tell us how brave were the men who explored Central Africa four and a half millenniums ago, and how like an eight-year-old boy was then to an eight-year-old boy now, even though he was called Pharaoh, and sat upon the greatest throne of the old world.

Herkhuf, as he tells us himself, had already made three long journeys into the Sûdan before the young king, Pepy II., came to the throne. In the king's second year, when he would be between seven and eight years old, he sent his faithful servant south on a fourth expedition; and this journey was even more successful than any of the other three, for Herkhuf pushed so far into the heart of Africa that he came into touch with that curious race of pygmies whom Stanley rediscovered on his last great journey in our own time. This was a wonderful feat, and all the more so because he was able to get hold of one of the little men, and to bring him north with him when he returned. Only once before, a hundred years ago, had such a thing happened, when the Chancellor of Egypt had managed to get a dwarf for King Assa. You may be quite sure that when Herkhuf got his precious dwarf safely as far as Aswan he sent off a swift galley at once to let Pharaoh know of his good luck. Indeed, we know that he did, because we have got the answer that the king sent.

It was in the middle of June, the dullest season of the Egyptian year, when the letter reached Pharaoh; and the poor little king, who was no doubt almost bored to death with court ceremonies and heavy robes and crowns in the burning weather, quite naturally went wild with joy at the thought of seeing this fine new living toy. His answer was sent off post-haste, a quaint mixture of the dignity of a great king writing to his subject, and the joy of an eight-year-old who is eager to see his treasure. "You have also said in your letter," he writes,

after the usual forms, "that you have brought back from the Land of Ghosts a pygmy of the dances of the god, like the pygmy which the Chancellor Burded brought back in the time of King Assa. Every year you are doing that which your lord wishes and approves, and you spend day and night with your caravans in carrying out that which your lord wishes, approves, or commands. Therefore My Majesty" (think of the royal dignity of his Mightiness) "will bestow on you many high honours . . . so that all people will say 'Is there anything like this which was done for Herkhuf, when he returned from Yam?' Come northward to the court at once, and bring with you this pygmy of the sacred dances, whom you have brought alive in good condition and health from the Land of the Ghosts, to please and delight the heart of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neferkere, who liveth for ever. When he goes with you on board the ship, appoint trustworthy people who shall remain with him on either side of the vessel; and take care that he does not fall into the water. When he sleeps at night, appoint trustworthy people who shall sleep beside him in his cabin; and make an inspection ten times each night. My Majesty wants to see this pygmy more than all gifts from the mines of Sinai or from the land of Punt. If, when you arrive at court, this pygmy with you is alive and in good condition and health, then My Majesty will do for you a greater thing than that which was done for Burded in the time of Assa, in conformity with the heart's desire of My Majesty to see this pygmy."

Pharaoh or no Pharaoh, you see a boy was just the same 4,000 years ago as he is to-day, and a new toy was to him the greatest thing in all the world. One wonders what the poor little man from Central Africa thought of it all, how he liked being wakened up ten times a night to see if he were keeping well, and whether he throve amidst all the splendours of Pharaoh's court, or whether, perhaps more likely, he pined away and died of a broken heart in that land of glaring sunshine, so far from the shade of his own dark forests. We shall never know; but at least here is a piece of real human nature, boy nature as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, coming to speak to us out of those long-dead years. "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neferkere (Pepy), who liveth for ever," lived to be nearly a hundred years old, so that he made a good attempt at living up to his title; but I question if he ever had a happier day in his long life than that on which he got Herkhuf's letter from Aswan, and sent off at once for the royal scribe, that he might tell him what to write back to his faithful and fortunate subject.

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Such, then, were some of the men who made the story of the Ancient East when the world was young. If there is one thing which the telling of what they did ought to write upon our minds, it is respect for the brave and wise of long ago, who did, with their poor tools and weapons, feats of travel and daring which may well keep us humble, as we think how little we have advanced upon what they have left to us.

CHAPTER XII

TURQUOISE-HUNTING IN SINAI

ONE of the first adventures that attracted the early Egyptian pioneers in the days when the young nation was beginning to feel its strength and to reach out beyond its own frontiers, and one of the last to which the dying empire clung with failing grasp 2,000 years later, was the adventure of Sinai. Indeed, it might almost be said that Sinai is a kind of barometer of the strength and prosperity of Egypt. If the country is strong and prosperous, or if its Pharaoh is ambitious, then almost to a certainty one may look for expeditions to Sinai, sometimes repeated again and again; if strength is failing, or spirit lacking in the ruler, then the expeditions drop off and die out. The first place in which the surplus energy of the nation found vent was always Sinai; and if Sinai was not touched for any length of time, one may be certain that there was something wrong with Egypt, and that she had no surplus strength to expend.

What was it which took the Egyptian adventurers to this barren and desolate peninsula? Certainly it was nothing attractive in the land itself. The Arabs have a saying that "When God made the Súdán, He laughed," and one can almost imagine the weird echoes of that awesome laughter ringing among the barren wastes and blasted peaks of the Sinai Peninsula. That triangle of burning sand and iron rock which projects southwards into the Red Sea seems as if it had been created merely to be the scrap-heap of the Near East. One who knew the land well has written that "the Peninsula of Sinai may claim to be the most naked spot on all the nakedness of Arabia." An inhospitable land was peopled to the extent (a very limited one) which its barrenness would enable it to support, by a people as inhospitable as their own brazen rocks, so that every expedition which sought its burning valleys had to be prepared to fight its way to its destination, and to maintain itself by force of arms when it got there. In short, the Sinai Peninsula was one of the best lands in the world—to stay away from; and it must have been one of the strongest of

attractions which drew band after band of the home-loving Egyptians to such an uninviting lodge in the wilderness.

Two such attractions there were. The first, and weaker of the two, was the simple fact that if folk in Egypt were craving for adventure, there was no place where they could get it so readily and easily as in Sinai. An expedition into equatorial Africa meant a long and wearisome journey of many months by road, or river, or both ; but Sinai lay, so to speak, almost at Egypt's door, and within easy reach. There was no need to make the long desert detour by the Isthmus of Suez and down the coast to the tip of the triangle. If you wanted to get to the mass of tangled mountains where the real adventure of the business lay, all that was involved, if you started from Upper Egypt, was a short journey on donkey-back from Koptos through the Wady Hammamat to the Red Sea port which the Greeks called *Leukos Limen*—"White Harbour," and we call Kosseir. There you got your squadron of boats waiting for you, with all supplies stowed on board by the careful Egyptian commissariat, and a short run up the Gulf of Suez brought you to the little bay of Ras Burdeys, where you landed almost under the shadow of the fantastic peaks of Sinai, painted with unearthly roses and purples, and seamed with dikes of flaming porphyry. If your start was from Lower Egypt, the thing was even simpler, for both the land journey and the sea voyage were considerably shorter. With the minimum of trouble the adventurous spirits of Egypt could get access to a land of romance, and combine the dubious joys of camping out in a desert land with the solid business of smiting the foolish people who did not appreciate the blessings of Egyptian civilization, the sand-dwellers and cave-dwellers, who actually dared to defend their own country against the warriors of Pharaoh. It was adventure on the easiest terms—a condition which has always appealed to the canny, practical Egyptian mind.

But the other attraction was far more potent and urgent. Nature had inspired the Egyptian with only a moderate and easily satisfied love of adventure ; but she had made him a born artist, to his very finger-tips, and in addition a thoroughly practical business man. He loved colour with a love that was almost a passion ; and of all colour there was none that appealed more forcibly to his sense of beauty than the colour of precious and half-precious stones. I have told you already that whatever else you may find or not find in the tomb of one of the earliest Egyptians, the one thing that is sure to be there will be the lump of beautiful green malachite, with its slate palette

for grinding down the stone into the face-paint that was a necessity of life. That was just the beginning of the love for all the beautiful stones—carnelian, amethyst, amazonite, lapis lazuli, green felspar, and all the others that the cunning Egyptian craftsman wove into the wonderful diadems and necklets at which all the world wonders when they come to light, as they did in the tomb of Tutankhamen. They had not so many of what we would call really precious stones; what they sought for was the colour, and they got that as well in these semi-precious stones as in the more costly jewels. Now with the malachite went turquoise, one of the most exquisitely coloured of all these stones, and a chief favourite in Egypt; and from the malachite, as we have seen the early smelters learning, came copper, which was becoming now a necessity for tools and weapons, and was soon to become still more important when men had learned to alloy it with tin, so as to produce bronze.

Now turquoise and malachite were both to be found, more or less abundantly, among the barren mountains of Sinai; and therefore to the weaker motive of love of adventure, there was added the double motive of love of beauty and love of profit to draw men from the comfortable Nile valley to the comfortless and dangerous wadies of the Peninsula. Turquoise and malachite were a good business proposition, for there was a constant demand for them for purposes of art and adornment; copper was an absolute necessity, and so still more a good business proposition. So one of the first things which an energetic Pharaoh did, so soon as he was fairly settled on his throne, was either to lead or to send an expedition to Sinai, to secure enough of all three things to keep business going in Egypt for a while. Almost invariably, at first, that meant a little war. The good folk of Sinai did not in the least appreciate the honour that was being done them by the advent of Pharaoh and his men, and did their best to make things uncomfortable for the king and his gentleman adventurers and miners; and so each expedition had to have its soldiers as well as its skilled miners. But you can imagine that the scattered groups of Arabs, with no organization better than tribal, and with poor weapons, had not the smallest chance against the disciplined Egyptian troops, armed with the best that skill could contrive and produce. Pharaoh blooded his new army at a cheap rate, earned a little glory to himself on the same easy terms, had a tablet carved on the rocks near the mines representing his gigantic self smiting a diminutive Bedouin chieftain, with an inscription glorifying himself as the "Lord of the Two Lands, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who is given life

for ever ; Smiter of the Asiatics of every country," and then went home to be adored and praised for his wonderful conquests, leaving the real business of the expedition to be done by the miners and their guard. In later days there came, naturally, to be less of the fighting and more of the mining in the business. The presence of the Egyptian ruiners, season by season, came to be such a regular thing that a temple was built at one of the mines for their special use, with some very curious arrangements, which we shall see directly. But probably, at the start, these mining expeditions served the young nation to blow off some of its superfluous energy, just as the young bloods of the Elizabethan age blew off theirs in voyages to the New World and raids upon the Spanish Main.

So now let us try to follow one of these adventures from the time when it starts from Thebes until the time when it comes back again, laden with turquoises in little leather bags, malachite in bigger ones, and copper which has been smelted away up in a valley of the Sinai hills, so hot that one would have imagined that a furnace would scarcely be needed. The expedition we are going with is not one of the great royal visits, led (at least in name) by Pharaoh himself, but simply one of the average ventures, with a total strength of about 500 men.

It would seem that the organizing of so small a force should be a simple matter, to be easily attended to by one or two officers ; but that was not the Egyptian way. They believed in division of labour, and each branch of the work had its own official who was responsible for seeing that his own little cog-wheel was in perfect order, and fitted into its place without a hitch. So the head of our expedition is a " Seal-bearer of the God," a high official of the Egyptian Department of the Interior. He has under him a Commander, who takes the general oversight and organization of the provisioning of the force ; a Seal-bearer, who looks after all the contracts for feeding and transport ; a Chief of Transport, who looks after the boats and asses ; a government clerk to attend to all requisitions for material ; a scribe to keep the accounts of the expedition, with his guards of the storehouse, who see that each man only gets what the scribe authorizes him to get ; a chief of the boats, who commands the actual boat service between the eastern and western shores of the Red Sea ; a General, who commands the guard of troops ; and perhaps a doctor to attend to the health of the party. Below these officials came the foremen miners, of whom you might have perhaps ten, each with his gang of miners under him ; a sculptor, who had to carve the tablets which were set up to commemorate the expedition ; and several

builders to see to the housing question and any work necessary at the miners' temple. Then there would also be a cook with his staff of under-cooks ; a guide, probably a native of Sinai ; and, most important of all, " the Deviser of Minerals "—a gentleman whom we should call the prospector, and whose task it was to find out to the best of his ability the most profitable places for working in. There was nothing left to chance, you see, in an Egyptian expedition, but everything was thought out beforehand, and every man had his place and knew exactly what he had to do. It was only this scrupulous care in organizing that enabled the Egyptians to do the wonderful work that they did—for instance, in building, where, the more men you had, the bigger would be the smash, unless each detail was provided for without the chance of a mistake. After all, such an expedition as we are thinking of would require a steady five tons of provisions for man and beast each day, and the assembling and distribution of that, with two desert journeys and a sea-voyage for each pound of stuff, was no small matter.

Our march lies first up the Wady Hammamat, famous for other expeditions not unlike our own, whose object, however, was the getting of fine stone for the decoration of temples and tombs. The Wady is no more attractive than the place we are going to, and we are glad enough to see the Red Sea sparkling before us at the end of the long tramp. The run by sea starts from the little port of Wady Gasus, a little north of Kosseir, and while we are waiting to go on board we take a look at some of the rock tablets on which former captains of expeditions have celebrated their safe return to Sewew, as the Egyptians called the harbour. A fast run brings us soon abreast of the tip of the Peninsula, and we sweep up past Ras Sebila and Tor, almost under the shadow of the grim peaks of Sinai, which thrust themselves up between us and the eastern sky like the teeth of some gigantic monster. We drive north of the main mass of the mountains, and soon comes Ras Burdeys, and the landing—a busy business, with all our stores and asses to be disembarked. Then the boats go south again to bring up our next supplies, and we set out on the dreary tramp up from the coast to the Wady Maghara, where we are to work for the first half of our stay in Sinai. The road lies up endlessly twisting valleys, each more desolate than the one before it, which wriggle and bend between forbidding mountains of granite and porphyry. The season is early, for only the hardiest can stand Sinai in the hot weather ; but even so the heat that beats down into the narrow valley, and is reverberated from the iron cliffs on either hand, is almost unbearable.

A drearier place than Maghara, when we come to it, you couldn't imagine. Two rugged glens, mere slashes in the hillside, unite to make a somewhat broader slash, which you could almost call a valley. The place looks just now as if it had never seen rain since it was created, and indeed rain is one of the rarest of happenings ; but all the same it is never safe to camp in the valley, for a chance thunder-storm will bring roaring torrents down the two branch glens in an hour, and turn the whole place into a foaming river 300 yards wide and 10 feet deep. Between the two glens an ugly, barren spur of hill thrusts out its riven and splintered sides, and just at the base of it a row of unsightly spoil-heaps shows where our work is going to lie. Previous expeditions have piled a dry-stone wall up the hillside for some distance, and carried it down across the valley and up the opposite hill, to prevent us all from being washed away in the event of a thunder-storm coming on ; and the fact that already a good part of the wall in the valley bottom has been knocked down by the rushing water shows that the precaution was not unnecessary.

Here, just behind the wall and close to the workings, are the walls of the huts for the chiefs of the expedition, left from the last one. They are good solid buildings, and though the sand-dwellers have carried off the wood of the roofs (for wood is a treasure in Sinai), we can easily make that good from our stores. Before night-time the huts will be ready for occupation again. But where are the workmen and their guards to camp ? Nobody dreams of giving them such luxury as these good stout huts. The roughest of shelters, a set of mere wind-screens to break the force of the storms that sometimes howl down these ravines, will do for them. But then, what about the wild beasts ? We do not fear the sand-dwellers, for we have our guard, and we have beaten them too often to care much for what they can do ; but—it is not for nothing that one of the ravines we passed is called Lioness Valley, and we have seen too many hyenas prowling about to feel safe camping in the open valley. Lions can do nothing against the strong huts of the chiefs, but it would be the easiest thing in the world to pick a miner, or half a dozen miners, out of their wind-screens, if these were down in the valley.

So we pick a spot on the top of the little hill opposite our works, 200 feet up ; we run a high dry-stone wall round the hill-top, with a narrow gateway, which can easily be closed at night with a mass of prickly thorn-bushes ; and inside this security we run up our wind-screens—125 of them, which will easily hold all our workers and their guard. When the thorn-bushes are drawn into the gateway, and our

sentinels set, we can sleep safely. The sentinel on the bleak hillside looks down in the cold moonlight, and sees the shadowy forms of lions moving to and fro, as they sniff and growl around the huts of the chiefs, or catches the wicked gleam in the eyes of a cowardly hyena as he prowls around our wall ; but we are safe enough, though, to tell the truth, it is bitter cold in the mornings up among these hills, however hot it may be by midday. Of course it is a nuisance to have to climb down one hill and up part of another to get to our work every morning, and to have to repeat the process, reversed, every night ; but even that is better than making a morning meal for a hungry lion.

It makes rather an eerie picture, does it not, that little camp out on the bleak hilltop in this accursed valley, with the wild beasts slouching round it, and the wilder men of the desert never very far off, eager to slay, if the slightest chance were offered ; while, within their rude shelters, the emissaries of civilization sleep their comfortless slumbers, and dream of the far-off Nile valley, with its plenty and peace ? They have come so far, and endured such discomforts and miseries, for the sake of toiling with their poor flint and copper tools, to hew from these cruel rocks a few handfuls of trifling little blue-green stones that will never be of any particular use to anybody, except to gratify some one's taste for colour, or to gain a few loads of copper ore that will enable them to make more tools for doing this work all over again. Man, you see, was just the same queer, unreasonable creature in the dawn of time that he is still, and half the daring and enduring that he has done has been done in pursuit of shadows and pretty toys like the Sinai turquoises. Job, describing just such work as this of our Egyptian miners, spoke of " Stones of darkness and the shadow of death," and I think he was not far wrong. The shadow of death was never very far away from the turquoise miner's camp at Wady Maghara.

After the expedition has been a few weeks at Maghara, and has got the best that can be got out of the workings in the time, it moves on to the next camp, 12 miles north, at Serabit el-Khadim, leaving behind it nothing but more spoil-heaps and a little more ugliness. You can still see the galleries of the ancient mines, with the chisel-marks of the copper chisels, and the broken flint chisels and mauls lying about to-day. Strange to think how the marks of the workmen's hands have survived all these thousands of years, and the busy hands themselves, and the men who thought and wrought it all out, are dust and ashes so long ago !

Serabit el-Khadim has some advantages that Maghara had not. We



GALLERIES IN THE EGYPTIAN TURQUOISE MINES AT SINAI.

(From Sir Flinders Petrie's "*Researches in Sinai*." By permission of Mr. John Murray and Sir Flinders Petrie.)

are a pious folk, and at Serabit we can exercise our piety, for we have a miners' temple there. It is dedicated to our own Egyptian goddess Hathor ; but because we believe, like all other nations, that each place has its local divinity ("gods of the hills and gods of the valleys"), we give our own Hathor a local name and call her "The Lady of Turquoise," just as a Roman Catholic has his local Madonnas. If we treat Hathor well, then she will treat us well, and Our Lady of Turquoise will show us the best places for finding her peculiar treasure. So a scribe is sent on ahead with offerings to the temple, and our "Deviser of Minerals" goes on with him, to arrange for a sleeping-place at or near the temple, where the goddess may send him a dream of where the turquoise is to be found. Nowadays we have little cubicles within the temple gates, where a man can sleep and dream of luck almost in the very presence of the goddess ; but things were rougher in older days when the first expeditions used to come.

Do you remember the incident in the story of Jacob, when, fleeing

from the anger of Esau, he came to Bethel, and "took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed . . ." ? Jacob was seeking guidance by a dream when he did that, and when he awaked, after the dream had come, he set up a memorial of the guidance that the dream had given him, in the shape of a pillar of stones, on the top of which he poured out an offering of oil, and called the place Bethel—"House of God"—because of his vision.

Well, these old "Devisers of Minerals" did exactly the same thing as Jacob did. When they came near the holy place where the Lady of Turquoise had her house, and could see in the distance the old temple on the hill, they piled up stones into a little circle to make a wind-screen within which they could sleep, and there they lay down at night and slept, hoping that in the night Hathor would visit them with a dream which would guide them to the right place in which to open their mine-gallery. And if the dream came and brought them luck, they would come back again to their Bethel, and set up a stone just as Jacob did, to commemorate the goodness of Hathor. And there some of these old circles, with their memorial stones, are standing to this day. What would men not give to find Jacob's pillar at the Palestine Bethel? But these Sinai Bethels have been standing far longer than from Jacob's day, some of them—memorials of anxious men who, just like Jacob, tried to make a bargain with God.

Well, then, we will suppose that Hathor has heard the prayer of our worried "Deviser of Minerals," and has sent him the right kind of dream. We have found the vein, and our leather bags are full of turquoise and malachite; while the smelters have also been busy, and we have a good load of copper. Ever since we came to Serabit, our sculptor has been working away at the tall, flat, round-topped pillar which is to be set up in memory of our visit. Now he has put the last touch to the long columns of picture-writing which tell the names of all the chiefs of the expedition, and the luck which it had; and at last it is set up, and the common miners, whose names, of course, no one would ever dream of carving on the slab, steal up in the early dawn, before the chiefs are about, and scratch their own names, all the same, on the precious pillar. They like to be remembered just as much as their betters. Already the hot weather is beginning to make its coming felt, but, before it is actually upon us, all is packed up and we are winding down the long valleys again, to meet our boats at Burdeys.

When we get to Wady Gasus, our chief will perhaps set up another tablet, being particularly well pleased with himself. Its story may



A "BETHEL" AT SINAI, WHERE A TURQUOISE MINER SLEPT TO
DREAM OF A GOOD VEIN.

Note the pillar put up (as Jacob did) to record his success.

(From Sir Flinders Petrie's "Researches in Sinai." By permission of Mr. John Murray and Sir Flinders Petrie.)

run something like this. "Giving divine praise and laudation to Horus and to Min of Koptos, by the hereditary prince, count, bearer of the royal seal, the master of the judgment-hall So-and-so, after his arrival in safety from the malachite country; his army being with him, prosperous and healthy, and all his ships having landed at Sewew." Then, at the end of the long tramp up the Hammamat valley would come the triumphant entry to Thebes, and the laying out of the bags of turquoise, malachite, and copper on the long gallery of the palace for the inspection, first of Pharaoh himself, and then, if luck has been unusually good, of all the good people of Thebes; after which our weary explorers and miners are at liberty to return to home and obscurity.

Of course, luck was not always with the mining parties. Sometimes

the sand-dwellers might score a hit, and wipe out a party altogether, though this did not happen often. And sometimes the turquoise hunters would fail, whether because they had not been good enough to the Lady of Turquoise, or for some other reason, and would come back empty-handed, to meet black looks and unpopularity at home, after all their labour. One very amusing tablet at Serabit el-Khadim tells us of the adventures of the "Treasurer of the god, master of the Double Cabinet, Hor-ur-ra," who was dispatched to "this Mine-land" quite out of season, in the very worst of the hot weather. The poor man tells us in feeling terms how uncomfortable one is in such circumstances. "When I came from Egypt my face flinched, and it was hard for me. The highlands are hot in summer, and the mountains brand the skin." Nevertheless the worthy man put the best face upon the job, and with comical insincerity tried to persuade his workmen that they were highly favoured in being privileged to be in Sinai in summer-time. "How favoured is he who is in this Mine-land," he said. The miners, however, had their own views on the subject. "They said, 'There is malachite enough for all eternity in this mountain, but it is ' (here the inscription is unfortunately broken, but one can imagine the adjective with which a British workman would have qualified the word with which it continues) "'foolishness to seek it at this season.' 'It is — to seek for it in this evil summer season.'"

Hor-ur-ra, however, was not to be discouraged by the open unbelief of his men; he stuck to his job, and evidently made them stick to theirs, no doubt with due offering of sacrifice to Our Lady of Turquoise; and in due time his reward appeared. "I brought genuine costly stone for the luxuries, more than any one who ever came hither. It was better than if I had come in the accustomed seasons thereof." And then the good man closes with a queer mixture of piety and smug self-satisfaction, which is thoroughly Egyptian. "Offer ye, offer ye, to the Mistress of Heaven, appease ye Hathor; if ye do, it will be profitable for you. If ye increase to her, it shall be well among you. I led my army very kindly, and I was not loud-voiced toward the workmen. I acted uprightly before all the army and the recruits, and they rejoiced in me."

Is it not a quaint old voice, sounding out so naturally to us from the days when Abraham was still living on earth? After all, there have surely been worse examples than that of this ancient explorer and master of labour. Trust in God, and behave well to your workmen. There are modern "captains of industry" who might be all the better for taking a pattern from their forerunner of 4,000 years ago.

CHAPTER XIII

A ROYAL BURIAL IN UR OF THE CHALDEES TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE ABRAHAM

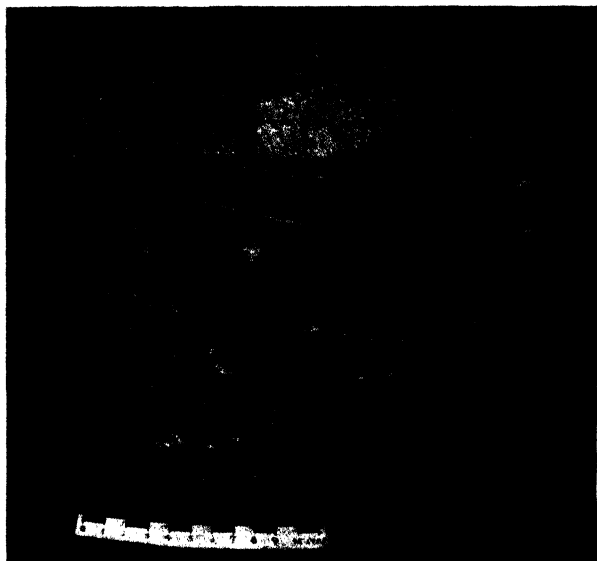
OUR last four chapters have been concerned entirely with the great men who were doing great things in early Egypt during what is called the Old Kingdom, and we have had to leave aside for a little the work that was being done away up in Babylonia by the great men of the Sumerian city-states. But we must not get into the way of thinking that Egypt was the only land of wonders in these wonderful early days, or even that she was necessarily the earliest to put her hand to the great works of architecture and art of which we have been thinking. The Egyptian was a very clever man and a most skilful craftsman, but there were other men in that ancient Eastern world who could do great and beautiful things as well as he. So much more has come down to us from Egypt than from any other country, for the reasons of which I told you, that we are apt at times to forget the other nations a little, and to be dazzled by the glitter of the Egyptian gold, and need to be reminded not only that the Egyptian was only one of several leaders of these early days, but that perhaps he was not even the first in point of time. And so it is just as well that the latest of the wonderful discoveries which have been coming with almost bewildering rapidity during these last few years should come from Babylonia, and should show to us how brilliant and splendid life could be in the court of one of these little Sumerian city-states when Egypt was just at the dawn of her long and magnificent day.

It is to Abraham's town, "Ur of the Chaldees," as the Bible calls it, that we have to go for the story that has to be told, but to Abraham's town at least 1,200 years—perhaps 1,500 years—before Abraham was heard of. Almost ever since the end of the Great War work has been going on at Ur on behalf of two of the great museums of the world—our own British Museum, and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, U.S.A. The work has been under the direction of Mr. C. Leonard Woolley, one of our own excavators, and

money and help has been supplied by both of the museums and their staffs ; and never have work and money been better spent than they have been at Ur since 1919. In our next chapter but one we shall see what we have learned from Mr. Woolley's excavations about Abraham's town in Abraham's day, and shall try to imagine Ur as it was when Abraham set out on his long journey of faith across the desert to the Land of Promise ; but in the meantime we have to think, not of anything so modern as a matter of 4,000 years ago, but of the great folks of the city of say 1,500 years earlier still. So let us travel away down the river from Bagdad, and see what the Museum expedition has been finding out about the kings and queens who reigned in Ur 5,500 years ago. A curious mixture of beauty and splendour with cruelty and barbarism we shall find it.

Father Abraham would scarcely know his mother country if he were to come back to Ur in these days. Instead of pacing slowly across the desert with a train of swaying camels, or drifting down from Bagdad in one of the round *gufas* that so much interested Herodotus, he would find himself being whirled across the land in a night train with good sleeping carriages and a dining-car, and would find himself confronted, on alighting at his destination, by a modern railway notice board bearing "the strange device," in English and Arabic, "Ur Junction : Change here for Nasiriyeh." As he tramped the two desert miles which divide the junction from his ancient home, he would gradually realize, however, that something at least remained unchanged, or but little changed. The tall pyramidal form of the great temple-tower of Father Nannar, the moon-god, would rise higher and higher across the waste as he advanced, and only when at last he stood directly beneath its shadow would he see that what he was looking upon was but a shattered skeleton from which the soul had long since departed.

But there would be some things at Ur of which even he, far back as his memories would stretch, had probably never so much as heard—certainly which he had never seen, and which the work of our Museum excavators has during these last months been unveiling to the curious gaze of the whole world. These are the royal tombs of the early kings of Sumerian Ur, dug and built in days before the Semitic stock of which Abraham sprang had come in to trouble the land, and half undo the work of its great pioneers. They are very different from the mountains of hewn limestone that we have been seeing in Egypt. A great rectangular pit is dug in the earth, and lined with arras of matting and floored with mats. It is approached by a sloping passage-



GOLDEN HELMET OF KING MES-KALAM-DUG.

(Joint Expedition of British Museum and University of Pennsylvania.)

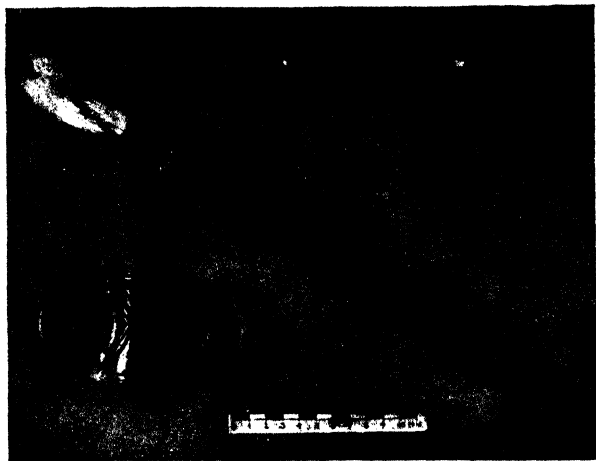
way which runs down into the pit at a gentle angle at its one end. In the other corner of the pit stands a chamber, built of hewn stone, and vaulted with brick. It measures about 16 feet by 12, and while it cannot for a moment bear comparison for size with even the smallest of the pyramids, and is far less imposing than even the built underground chambers of the earliest royal tombs in Egypt, it is worth your notice. For here is not only stonework (and that in an almost stoneless land) as early as anything that you will see in the Land of the Nile, but also something which you will not find yet, even in that country of master-builders. For the built vault of this tomb chamber is a true vault, built of brick on the same principle of the arch which has been the triumph of the builder's art ever since. This is the earliest arch known to exist in the world, the "rude forefather" of the vast spans of our bridges or our cathedral vaults. Beyond the north-eastern wall of the tomb chamber, and almost touching it, lies another tomb, its chamber built in the same way, with a brick arched

roof over a stone structure. This belonged to a queen, as the other to a king, and it is possible that the two may have been husband and wife, close to one another in death as they had been in life. Fortunately, enough has been found in these two tombs to tell us something of the state and splendour of these early Sumerian kings of the city-states, and how they were laid in their resting graves with a strange mixture of magnificence and barbarism.

Let us imagine ourselves, then, in Ur one notable day somewhere about the year 3500 B.C. I can only say "somewhere about," for it may even be a century or two later than this. A century does not seem to make a great deal of difference when you are dealing with a good many thousands of years. To keep our ideas about the different countries straight, we may remember that it is just about this time that the three great kings who are to make a united Egypt are ruling in the Nile valley—King Scorpion, King Narmer, and King Aha-Mena—and are slowly building up a great nation there. Here in Ur, of course, our kings are nothing like the mighty men who are welding a whole nation into one. They are only lords of the few square miles round about their own city, or perhaps their own and one or two other cities, but all the same they are very great in their own estimation and that of their subjects, and they have, even more almost than the Egyptian kings, command of plenty of gold and silver and lapis lazuli, and of cunning craftsmen to make the precious metals and the beautiful stones into things that are a joy to look upon.

To-day, however, is a sad day in Ur, for our king, A-bar-gi, has gone to his Father Nannar, the moon-god, who watches over our city, and we shall have to lay him away in the great stone tomb that has been preparing for him beyond the walls of the city. It is said, too, that his queen, the lady Súb-ad, is so overwhelmed with sorrow at his death that the court physician doubts if anything can be done to save her. A few days may see her following her husband on the long journey to the Land of No-Return. King A-bar-gi lies now in his decorated wooden coffin, his head covered with a great ceremonial wig of hammered and engraved gold, over which is placed his diadem of gold, inlaid with lapis lazuli and carnelian. His gold-embroidered robes are almost hidden beneath a mass of gold and silver, lapis and carnelian beads, among which nestle dozens of amulets in costly stone and gold. These, it may be hoped, will protect His Majesty against all the dangers of the long and gloomy journey which lies ahead of him.

The coffin is laid upon a great wagon of inlaid wood, whose heavy



DAGGER WITH SILVER HILT, GOLDEN DOUBLE AXE, AND
GOLDEN ORDINARY AXE, FROM UR.

(Joint Expedition of British Museum and University of Pennsylvania.)

solid wheels are shod with leather tyres. Three big white oxen are harnessed to the wagon. Round their great necks are silver collars, and their reins are made of long strings of beads, alternately silver and lapis lazuli. The pole-rings of the wagon are tipped with figures of bulls in silver. A groom, splendidly dressed, stands at the heads of the patient beasts, and the driver is close to one of the wheels. Behind the wagon six guardsmen of the royal guard stand in rank, with their copper helmets and silver chin-straps, their copper-tipped pikes, and daggers slung from silver belts by silver chains. Behind the guardsmen, again, comes another wagon, inlaid and decorated like the first, with its three oxen, its groom and its driver, and in it are seated a dozen of the fairest ladies of the royal harem, who wear wonderful head-dresses of gold ribbon twined through gold leaves, heavy necklets of lapis and carnelian beads, and great gold earrings. Each one of them holds in her hand one or two cockle-shells of gold or silver, containing face-paint; while in her other hand she holds a small limestone cup of wine. In spite of all their bravery of dress, they are all weeping, as they well may be; for the part which they, like the guardsmen, have to play at the close of to-day's ceremony is a grim and sad one.

Behind the second wagon comes a group of courtiers, led by another helmeted guardsman. They are the personal attendants of the dead king, who are not to be separated from him now any more than they were in life. This glittering group of sixty persons around the two wagons forms the head of the funeral procession, and behind it comes an endless line of court officials clad in gorgeous robes of all the colours of the rainbow, curiously scalloped at the foot. The upper parts of their bodies are bare, and they carry gold and silver vessels of all sorts to store His Majesty's tomb withal—fluted golden bowls of exquisite shape and finish, silver libation vases, that the dead king may have wherewithal to pour out his offerings to the gods of the underworld; golden daggers with hilts of lapis lazuli, and gold open-work sheaths of the most delicate filigree work—everything that a king might chance to need to maintain his royal state among the



DAGGER AND SHEATH, GOLD AND LAPIS LAZULI, FROM UR.
(*Joint Expedition of British Museum and University of Pennsylvania.*)

great dead kings of the past. They are followed by another company of helmeted guardsmen, who have a stern duty to perform before all is done; and behind the last of the guards comes the long company of the mourning citizens.

Now we have reached the gaping mouth of the sloping passage which leads underground to the tomb-chamber. The heavy coffin of King A-bar-gi is taken from the wagon and carried down the passage by the six guardsmen. Behind it walk the dead king's closest personal attendants, his scribe and his cup-bearer. The little procession turns out of the tomb-passage into the built chamber, and the coffin is laid down, with the golden bowls and the rest of the funeral furniture ranged round it, while the priests offer prayers on behalf of their master. Then there is a pause; the crowd waiting at the gaping mouth of the tomb hear two muffled thuds as of heavy blows being struck, followed by a deep groan. The six guardsmen come out of the chamber, which is then carefully sealed by the king's seal-bearer, and rank themselves in the entrance-passage of the tomb. The scribe and the cup-bearer, you see, have not come out. They have joined



GOLDEN COMB OF QUEEN SÛB-AD.

(Joint Expedition of British Museum and University of Pennsylvania.)

their royal master in the underworld, and their bodies will lie beside his for the next 5,000 years.

Now the twelve beautiful ladies, with their golden diadems, are ranked along the south-eastern wall of the chamber, with all their golden cockle-shells and the rest of their finery about them, and the remaining members of the group of sixty that we saw ranged around the wagons follow them, and are ranked close together in the passageway of the tomb, nearest to the chamber. Finally the two wagons are backed down the slope, and stand side by side at the foot of it. The six copper-helmeted guardsmen stand to attention in front of the heads of the oxen, and all is ready for the last part of the ceremony. What that is, I need not tell you in detail. The company of guards which brought up the funeral procession is marched to the mouth of the passage, and disappears within. The waiting crowd again hears

months ago. They have taught us, also, how thin may be the veneer which covers the barbarian in the most gorgeous and cultured of states, and not all the magnificence of the treasure of their tombs can make us forget the slaughtered men and women who lay among it all, or drown the last note of the stricken harpist.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STORY OF A CITY-STATE OF BABYLONIA

UNFORTUNATELY for us, it is by no means so easy to find a thread on which to string the beads of historic fact which have survived in Babylonia as it is in Egypt. Even there, the thread is often broken and tangled ; but in Babylonia what offers itself as a thread generally ends in a loose end almost immediately, and the half-dozen new threads that offer themselves prove to be no better than the one which has just disappointed you. Sometimes it is one race which is at the top, sometimes another ; now the ruling line is from Kish, now from Erech, now from Ur, or from any one of a dozen cities which float up to the surface for a while, and then disappear again. Really, it does not matter a great deal to our story which of the city-states was holding a rather shaky supremacy at any particular moment. What we have to try to do is to get into our minds two ideas—first, that the early story of Babylonia is the story of how two great races strove for supremacy, and first one and then another was master in the land. Of these two races, the first was apparently that Sumerian people of whom we have heard already, and who were the leaders of that part of the world in knowledge and art. But, on the other hand, the first ruling power that we can trace in the land is not Sumerian but Semitic—that is to say, it belongs to the same famous race as that from which the Hebrews afterwards came. Then the wheel takes a turn again, and the Sumerians are found at the top, ruling the land, and they hold their supremacy for a long time, during which they did a great amount of wonderful work which is now being brought to light.

Once more it is the turn of the Semite, and a great and famous king, Sargon of Akkad, seizes the supreme power, and builds up an empire which stretches from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. He hands on his sceptre to a succession of famous kings or emperors—Rimush, Manishtusu, and Naram-sin and Shargalisharri, during whose reigns Babylonia was probably the greatest power of the ancient world. Then, as ruling lines will, the line of Sargon fades away, and after a time of confusion the Sumerians get their heads up again,

the sound of muffled blows and groans. But it is only for a little while. Soon the guardsmen march out again, looking a little white and shaky as they come out into the brilliant sunshine once more. The mouth of the tomb is built up and sealed, and the faithful sixty, faithful even unto death, are left to watch over the sleeping king through the long centuries. More than 5,000 years after this, men of a race of whom the men of Ur had never dreamed will open that sloping passage again, and find the ranked guardsmen lying as they fell, the oxen sleeping in their silver and lapis harness, the grooms and drivers waiting for the order which never came, the poor beauties of the harem stretched among the wrecks of all their finery ; and within the tomb-chamber, all that was left of King A-bar-gi and his scribe and cup-bearer. A strange and grim finding, in spite of all the beauty of the wrought gold and silver which lay tumbled in the tomb. Not least strange the irony of the fact that, after all the precautions taken for the welfare of the king in his long home, the years and the robbers of the past had so dealt with the king and his servants that it was impossible to tell which of the three was the monarch and which were his humble slaves.

“ The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings ;
Sceptre and crown must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.”

A little later Queen Sûb-ad followed her husband along the same dark road, and was laid to rest, as the king had been, in the tomb beside his. We needn't follow the procession as we did that of King A-bar-gi, but we can take a glimpse of the queen as her subjects leave her to sleep the sleep of fifty centuries undisturbed. She lies on a bier, wearing a golden head-dress of ribbons, leaves, and flowers, fastened with a great gold pin, branched and tipped with mosaic flowers. In her ears are heavy golden earrings, and her coat of gold-embroidered brocade is covered, like her husband's, with beads and amulets. Beside her lies a second diadem, a leather snood, covered with tiny beads of gold and lapis, and decorated with golden figures of animals and ears of corn, bunches of pomegranate and flowers. At the head of the bier and the foot sleep her two attendants, as Iras and Charmian lay beside the dead Cleopatra. Around the bier, within the chamber, lay masses

of gold and silver vessels, nests of fluted and engraved silver tumblers, silver lamps, golden bowls, and cockle-shells of face-paint.

Outside the chamber, in the entrance passages, lay the slain attendants, the chariot with its asses, its grooms and driver, the maids of honour, with their golden head-dresses, and a group of men-servants. Most pathetic of all was the harp, which lay as it had fallen, its silver-cased wood decorated with lapis lazuli, its golden keys and its twelve strings still traceable, while beside it crouched the harpist, with her gold-ribbon hair-net and large golden crescent earrings, her arm still stretched across the strings of her harp. One seems still to hear the last broken twang of the strings as the dying girl's arm twitched when the fatal blow fell!

Such were the burials of a king and queen of Ur of the Chaldees, twelve centuries at least before the man was born who has made the city famous for ever. King A-bar-gi and Queen Sûb-ad little dreamed, in the midst of their greatness, that the time would come when men of an alien race would lay all the splendour and savagery of their state in the underworld bare to the pitiless light of day, and count one of its chief interests to be its association with the name of a common Semite who should be born in their city 1,200 years after they were

laid in their graves. No more surprising discovery has been made in our times than this revelation of the magnificences of these so long unknown kings and queens of Ur. Tutankhamen's splendours are, indeed, still more gorgeous than those of King A-bar-gi, but they date from at least 1,800 years later, and they have taught us little that we did not know before. The wonders of the funeral state of the kings of Ur have told us how vastly more advanced was that earliest civilization of Babylonia than we had ever imagined up till a few



LADY'S GOLDEN VANITY-CASE,
FROM UR OF THE CHALDEES.
(Joint Expedition of British Museum and
University of Pennsylvania.)

months ago. They have taught us, also, how thin may be the veneer which covers the barbarian in the most gorgeous and cultured of states, and not all the magnificence of the treasure of their tombs can make us forget the slaughtered men and women who lay among it all, or drown the last note of the stricken harpist.

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THE STORY OF A CITY-STATE OF BABYLONIA

UNFORTUNATELY for us, it is by no means so easy to find a thread on which to string the beads of historic fact which have survived in Babylonia as it is in Egypt. Even there, the thread is often broken and tangled ; but in Babylonia what offers itself as a thread generally ends in a loose end almost immediately, and the half-dozen new threads that offer themselves prove to be no better than the one which has just disappointed you. Sometimes it is one race which is at the top, sometimes another ; now the ruling line is from Kish, now from Erech, now from Ur, or from any one of a dozen cities which float up to the surface for a while, and then disappear again. Really, it does not matter a great deal to our story which of the city-states was holding a rather shaky supremacy at any particular moment. What we have to try to do is to get into our minds two ideas—first, that the early story of Babylonia is the story of how two great races strove for supremacy, and first one and then another was master in the land. Of these two races, the first was apparently that Sumerian people of whom we have heard already, and who were the leaders of that part of the world in knowledge and art. But, on the other hand, the first ruling power that we can trace in the land is not Sumerian but Semitic—that is to say, it belongs to the same famous race as that from which the Hebrews afterwards came. Then the wheel takes a turn again, and the Sumerians are found at the top, ruling the land, and they hold their supremacy for a long time, during which they did a great amount of wonderful work which is now being brought to light.

Once more it is the turn of the Semite, and a great and famous king, Sargon of Akkad, seizes the supreme power, and builds up an empire which stretches from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. He hands on his sceptre to a succession of famous kings or emperors—Rimush, Manishtusu, and Naram-sin and Shargalisharri, during whose reigns Babylonia was probably the greatest power of the ancient world. Then, as ruling lines will, the line of Sargon fades away, and after a time of confusion the Sumerians get their heads up again,

and hold the chief power for a while. And then, finally—at least finally so far as regards this part of the story—the turn of the Semites comes once more, and one of the very greatest kings of all time, Hammurabi of Babylon, sets up an empire with Babylon as its centre, and leaves us the code of laws by which his empire was governed, and which is one of the most remarkable things which have come down to us from these ancient days. Hammurabi you may place by keeping in your minds the fact that he lived probably at the same time as Abraham, and that not unlikely he was that “Amraphel king of Shinar” who leagued himself with “Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam, and with Tidal, king of the Goyyim, and Arioch, king of Ellasar,” and got rather rough handling from the founder of the Hebrew race—much to his surprise, no doubt.

But even Hammurabi, great king as he was, cannot make his line enduring, any more than Sargon could; and when he is gone, his kingdom soon falls into the hands of a new set of conquerors, called the Kassites, who rule over it, not very successfully, for 600 years. By the time that the Kassites appear on the scene, however, we are getting into touch with different times and peoples, and the old world of which we have been thinking is passing away before the rise of the great empires. Egypt makes her bid for world supremacy; then comes the long wrestle between her and the Hittites, and, by the time that is over, the dark shadow of the cruel Assyrian empire is beginning to fall across the scene. But all this is a long way ahead as yet, and what I want to do in the meantime is simply to trace the fortunes and ups and downs of one of the city-states of Babylonia, during the times when some of the earlier changes I have just been mentioning were happening. The state which we choose is not one of the most important, nor one of the most long-lived of such states, but it is one of which we know perhaps more than we do of any of the others, and it has the advantage of having come to a fairly sudden end, not very long after its prosperous time, so that the remains of its story have not been mixed up with later history in the way that those of some of the other states have been confused.

The little city of Lagash, whose ruins were excavated by the famous French explorer, de Sarzec, towards the end of the nineteenth century, must have made a start, far away back among the mists of antiquity, as a little community of folk, living around a poor shrine of wattle and mud which they had built among the Babylonian marshes, and dedicated to their local god Ningirsu. By and by they began to find that something better than wattle and daub, pitched on



IM-DUGUD, THE LION-HEADED EAGLE OF LAGASH, GRASPING TWO STAGS.

Copper work, 5,000 years old, from Ur.

(Dr. H. R. Hall, *British Museum*.)

the low-lying plain, was needed to withstand the floods of autumn. So they organize themselves for two things: first, to make a brick platform on which their temple and their houses can stand above the flood-level; and, second, to make canals to regulate the flood-water, so that the inundations shall not destroy everything, but shall be a help instead of a hindrance. That implied, as we have seen, putting themselves under the command of one man who served as both priest of Ningirsu and ruler of the community, and who called himself the *Patesi* of Lagash. Presently we find that the little town is beginning to extend its property beyond the little ring of fields round the city-wall, for one of the first records of the place that we have tells us of a dispute between Lagash and its neighbour town, Umma, over the boundary-line between the territories of the two cities. The dispute is settled in quite a modern way, for the two cities call in a third party to act as arbitrator, and accept his decision as final—for the moment. The arbitrator in this first of all such cases that we know of, was Mesilim, the Semitic king of Kish, who seems to have claimed a kind of overlordship of the two cities. But the settlements of the disputes between Lagash and Umma were not always to be so peaceful, as we shall see.

This first piece of the history of Lagash would come somewhere about 3500 B.C., just about the time when the three great kings, Scorpion, Narmer, and Aha-Mena were settling things in Egypt.

Then for a little while we hear nothing of the little town but the barbarous sounding names of some of its early *patesis*—Lugal-shag-engur, and Enkhegal. But about 500 years later than the time of the arbitration treaty, just about the time when the pyramids were beginning to be built in Egypt, we can see the town fairly established and thriving under a wise ruler, whose name, Ur-Nina, is not such a jaw-breaking one as some of the other Babylonian names. It wasn't called Lagash then, however, and its earlier name shows you the kind of conditions out of which these early Babylonian cities sprang. Girsu, it was called, and that means "Place-of-the-waters." The god of the town, you remember, was called Ningirsu, which means "Lord-of-the-Floods." So that, altogether, you can imagine that Lagash had a pretty watery start, and that it was not before time that the first inhabitants built their brick platform to keep their temple and their houses out of the reach of the inundation. They built it well, anyhow, for some of the old platform and a bit of one of the storehouses which stood upon it are still standing, underneath the higher and bigger building which Ur-Nina built when he came to power. So you imagine the little place perched up upon its brick base above the plain, surrounded with a thick brick wall, and clustering its closely-packed houses round the temple of the "Lord-of-the-Floods," whose stage-tower rises high above the roofs. Indeed, by the time we see it, Ur-Nina, who is a pious man, has built several other temples besides the big one to Ningirsu: one to Nina, the goddess of irrigation, whose help would be much needed in those days; one to Gatumdug, whose ugly name is that of the goddess of healing; and one to Ninmarki. So that altogether Girsu is quite imposing when you see it from without, and one need not wonder that now Ur-Nina begins to call himself "King of Lagash."

What happened after his death, when his son Akurgal succeeded him, we do not know very certainly, though there are hints of trouble; but when Akurgal's son, Eannatum, came to the throne, it was not long before the old trouble between Umma and Lagash broke out again. It was long since King Mesilim of Kish had settled the old frontier dispute between the two towns; but the old sore still rankled, and there was a bit of land called Gu-edin, which the men of Umma specially coveted. Their *patesi*, Ush, was commanded by his own city-god, so we are told, to plunder Gu-edin, which he promptly did, marching out with his town-militia and breaking down the boundary stones. When Eannatum heard of this unprovoked attack, he showed himself a wise soldier. If he hurried out with his troops at once he

would only have a hot chase after his enemy, without any hope of catching him before he could turn and give battle under the shelter of his own walls. So he quietly gathered his army, and then went up to the temple to lay his grievance before Ningirsu. The god assured him that when he went forth to battle, Babbar, the sun-god, who makes the city bright, would go before him and give him victory. Cheered by this promise, Eannatum led out his army; while, on their part, the men of Umma were nothing loth to meet him, and marched out, probably to the disputed ground. Ningirsu kept his promise. The army of Umma was completely defeated, though we need not believe that 3,600 men of Umma, still less 36,000, were killed in the battle, as Eannatum says. Anyhow, the defeat was so sharp as to take the heart completely out of Umma, and when Eannatum pursued his enemy up to the walls of the rival city, he found little resistance, and swept over Umma, as he tells us, "like an evil storm." Ush, the unlucky ruler who had made such a miscalculation of his strength, disappeared, and another *patesi*, Enakalli, hastened to make a treaty of peace. Gu-edin, the land over which the quarrel had arisen, was restored to Lagash; a deep frontier ditch was dug between the lands of the two cities, the old boundary-stone, which the invaders had knocked down, was set up again, and a new one was added on which the treaty of peace was engraved. Then Eannatum, having carefully buried the slain of his own army, marched home again in triumph, leaving the dead of Umma to have their bones picked clean by the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.

Of course, it is only a little border squabble, but it is interesting because it gives us one of the first real pictures of ancient warfare, as it was seen on the spot by the men who made it. For Eannatum carved the picture of the whole business on a great stone pillar, and one of the strokes of luck which favoured de Sarzec when he excavated the old town was the discovery of the broken fragments of this most ancient of battle pictures. You see Eannatum leading out his men to battle. He marches in front of them, wearing a pointed helmet with ear-pieces, and carrying a spear and a boomerang. Behind him comes the solid phalanx of his infantry, the front-rank men armed with battle-axes, and carrying huge bucklers which protect them from chin to ankle. Behind them are the spearmen, each holding a long pike, which projects beyond the men of the front rank. It is a regular armour-plated mass, bristling with pike-points; and you can imagine that when it met another mass, similarly armed, "the meeting of those champions proud seemed the bursting of a thunder-cloud." The two

heavy phalanxes would heave and push at one another, nobody getting much hurt, until one was borne back and broken by sheer weight. Then the front-rank men would throw away their cumbrous bucklers, and get to work with their axes, and it was then, no doubt, that the real slaying began.

Another scene on Eannatum's pillar of victory represents the burying of the slain heroes of Lagash, who are being carefully piled together and covered with earth; while the dead of Umma lie out scattered in the field, with vultures tearing their flesh. It is from this gruesome part of the picture that the pillar takes its name, "The Stele of the Vultures." One more scene shows us the god Ningirsu, holding in his left hand the ancient coat-of-arms of Lagash, the eagle grasping two lions in its talons, while in his right he holds a net in which writhe and squirm the miserable captives of the battle. One of them has managed to get his head out of the net, and Ningirsu is giving him a gentle tap on the head with his mace to make him lie quiet again.

Eannatum warred elsewhere as well as against his troublesome neighbours of Umma, and if you can believe his own account he was always successful, though one is not quite sure about all his triumphs. In addition, he beautified his town with additions to its temples, and dug new canals. Altogether, if he is telling the truth, it was a happy time for Lagash and a prosperous one. "In those days," says the king, "did Ningirsu love Eannatum."

But Umma was not done with yet, and when Eannatum was gathered to his fathers, its new *patesi*, Urlumma, took advantage of the change, invaded Gu-edin again, and smashed up the boundary pillars, casting the fragments into the fire, and levelling to the ground the frontier chapels which were supposed to keep the border sacred. Enannatum, the new ruler of Lagash, marched out at once and gave him battle, successfully, as a later king says. But Enannatum's own son, Entemena, says nothing about a victory, and perhaps the result was indecisive. At all events, Urlumma continued to worry Lagash, until at last Entemena took him in hand and cured him finally of his mischief-making by killing him in battle and capturing his town once more. Entemena's victory seems to have put a stop for a while to the strife between the two neighbours, and for a number of reigns we know nothing about the history of the little city but the names of its rulers.

Then there came to the throne of Lagash a king, Urukagina, who was born several centuries too soon. For he had already, at this

early stage, formed the curious idea, which seems all right to us now, but was a dangerous heresy then, that a city should be governed in the interests of the whole body of its people, and not in those of a handful of privileged folk. When he came to the throne he found that his people were so heavily taxed that they could hardly live. As he puts it himself: "Within the limits of the territory of Ningirsu there were inspectors down to the sea." The ruler had been in the habit of seizing for himself the income from much of the temple land, and no doubt his courtiers followed their king's example. The priest's fee for burying a man was 7 jars of wine, 420 loaves of bread, 120 measures of corn, a cloak, a kid, a bed, and a seat—a most extraordinary mixed bag for such a simple thing as a funeral. Indeed, about the most expensive thing you could do in Lagash, apparently, was to die. King Urukagina soon put a stop to this shameful robbery. Henceforward, he decreed, the charge for a burial was to be only 3 jars of wine, 80 loaves of bread, a bed, and a kid—which seems quite enough still, but is certainly a great improvement on the extortion that went on before. Everywhere he insisted on similar reforms, all cheapening the cost of living, to say nothing of dying, to his poor people. Bribes he abolished, and set the example to his subjects by giving up of his own free will the fees which had to be paid to the Crown by all who wished to consult the gods by divination.

Now this was all good, and Urukagina was doing noble work; but sometimes to do good in too great a hurry results in almost as much mischief as to do evil does. The king, no doubt, pleased all his poorer subjects by his reforms; but he offended all the richer and more powerful men, who saw the fountain of wealth cut off at its source, and realized that they were not to be allowed to fleece the weak any longer as they pleased. No doubt the priests raised a howl about the loss of their death-duties, and the diviners about the loss of the fees for their little swindles; and altogether all the ruling classes in Lagash were highly discontented, and were quite sure that things would never be right in the old town again until this upsetting reformer was taken out of the way.

Unluckily for Urukagina and his reforms, the power to take him out of the way was not far off. Umma, the old enemy, was watching its chance. It, too, had acquired a new and vigorous king, who already was framing ambitious plans of conquest. Now that Lagash was seething with discontent, Lugal-zaggisi, the new king of Umma, saw that his chance had come. He invaded the territory of Lagash, and swept over the city with fire and sword. Urukagina and his reforms

went down in the storm of war, and vanished from the scene. Whether the good king perished, or survived in obscurity, we do not know. In either case he paid, like many other great men, the penalty of being in advance of his times. Not for many centuries yet was the world to understand the great principle on which he appears to have been working—indeed, it is doubtful if it is fully understood to this day. The fate of this early reformer curiously resembles that of a more famous reformer of fifteen centuries later. When Akhenaten of Egypt, master of the greatest empire that the world had yet seen, used his exalted position to preach a universal religion, and a doctrine of peace on earth, he found that not even all the prestige of his imperial line could support him against the malice and stupidity which upheld the old order of things ; and his reforms, like Urukagina's, went down in disaster.

Meanwhile, it seemed that the day of Lagash was done, and that its ancient enemy had finally triumphed. When the site of the old city was being excavated, Captain Cros, who carried on the work after the death of de Sarzec, found a tablet of this time, on which some priest of the time had told the sad story of the city's fall, and called down curses upon its spoilers. It reminds one of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. " The men of Umma have set fire to the Eki-kala ; they have set fire to the Antasurra ; they have carried away the silver and the precious stones ! They have shed blood in the palace of Tirash ; they have shed blood in the Abzu-banda ; they have shed blood in the shrine of Enlil and in the shrine of the sun-god ; they have shed blood in the Akhush ; they have carried away the silver and the precious stones ! " So the dreary tale of murder and pillage runs on, becoming finally impressive by its very sameness ; and at last the writer ends with a curse upon the marauders. " The people of Umma, because they destroyed Lagash, have committed wickedness against Ningirsu. The power which came to them shall be taken away. There is no wickedness upon the part of Urukagina, king of Girsu. But as to Lugal-zaggisi, the *patesi* of Umma, may his goddess Nidaba cause him to bear this wickedness on his shoulders."

One of the priests of the goddess Bau of Lagash, Dingiraddama by name, wrote a dirge over the destruction of the goddess's temple and worship, which became one of the popular hymns of Babylonia in later days, and has come down to us. Here are a few lines of its tale of woe, which, like the Psalms of the Hebrews, help us to realize that the folk of those far-off days were real men and women like ourselves, with hopes and fears, sorrows and prayers :

" For the city, alas the treasures, my soul doth sigh.
For my city Girsu, alas the treasures, my soul doth sigh.
In holy Girsu the children are in distress.
Into the interior of the splendid shrine he (the conqueror) pressed.
The august queen from her temple he brought forth.
O lady of my city, desolated, when wilt thou return ?
O Shepherd, may the prayers appease thee.
O afflicting Shepherd, I would appease thee.
O afflicting Shepherd, be appeased.
O Lord of lamentation, by the woe of my city, by the woe of my temple, be
appeased ! "

Spite of the curses of ruined Lagash, however, Lugal-zaggisi, the destroyer, prospered exceedingly. He, of course, attributed his success to his own gods, as Lagash relied upon hers to avenge her ; and for about a quarter of a century it seemed that his gods were the stronger, for he grew from being merely the priest-king of Umma into a great king and a mighty conqueror, who boasts that he conquered all the lands from the Lower Sea (the Persian Gulf) to the Upper Sea (the Mediterranean).

Fate was only waiting for him, however, and though his judgment pursued him only with halting foot, it overtook him at the last. After he had reigned about twenty-five years, there arose in Akkad the great Semitic conqueror Sargon, of whom I told you at the beginning of this chapter, and Lugal-zaggisi's newly-built empire toppled down before the attack of this mighty soldier faster than it had arisen. Lugal-zaggisi was put in fetters and taken as a captive to Nippur. All his work passed away like the shadow of a dream, and the Semite was left master of the land. One wonders if the priest of Lagash, who had cursed Lugal-zaggisi so roundly, lived to rejoice over his overthrow. Perhaps, even if he did see it, he realized that vengeance had not come as he would have had it come ; for Lagash had only changed a master of her own race for an alien lord.

But better days were in store for the ruined city. It was nearly two centuries before she began to rise again from her ashes. When that happened, Sargon's dynasty was beginning to totter before the attacks of the wild northern barbarians of Gutium, who finally overthrew it, and were overlords of Babylonia for a time. But the rude highlanders from the north apparently meddled little with the quiet city-states so long as they caused no trouble ; and for a while Lagash had a wonderful Indian summer of prosperity before the long winter came and buried her temples and towers under a drift that covered them for four millenniums.

The happy time of the little city began with the *patesi* Ur-bau, of whom we know that he rebuilt the ruined shrines of the gods in his city, and raised it once more to a position of importance among the towns of Babylonia. One thinks of him as something like Nehemiah—not a man of war, but a wise and prudent statesman, who knew how to rebuild a state as well as a temple, and who left his city strong and prosperous when he passed on the sceptre to his successors.

One of these, the most famous perhaps of all the rulers of Lagash, was Gudea, who ruled somewhere about 2500 B.C., and who has left us long accounts of his works, and especially of how he built the great temple, E-ninnu, of Ningirsu the city-god. Gudea always reminds one of Solomon. Like the wise king of Israel, he was not a warrior, but a man of peace; like him, he sought to gather treasures from all the ends of the earth to beautify the house of his god; and like him, too, he was guided in his works by dreams which, as he believed, were sent to him by the gods. It was a dream of this sort which set him upon his great work of building E-ninnu, and he has told the whole dream to us in full detail.

The dream came, he says, because of a conference of the great gods in heaven. Enlil, the chief of the gods, was holding converse with Ningirsu, the god of Lagash, and commented upon a drought which was devastating the land. The reason of it, he said, was that the worship of the gods was being neglected, and so the fruitful floods did not come. "Let the king (Ningirsu) therefore proclaim the temple. Let the decree of the temple E-ninnu be made illustrious in heaven and upon earth!" Immediately upon this conference there came to King Gudea a dream. He saw a man whose height was so great that it equalled the heavens and the earth. On his head was a crown, and Gudea knew him for a god. By his side was the eagle Im-dugud, the badge of Lagash, his feet were upon the whirlwind, and one lion crouched at his right hand, and another on his left. The figure spoke to Gudea, but in a tongue he could not understand. Then the sun rose, and Gudea saw a woman holding a reed for writing in her hand, and carrying a tablet on which was a star. Then came a second man, like a warrior; he carried a tablet on which he drew the plan of a temple. Then before Gudea there was set a fair cushion, and on the cushion a mould, and in the mould was a brick. And at his right hand Gudea saw an ass which lay upon the ground.

Gudea awoke, and was troubled at his dream, for he could not understand the meaning of it. So he sought the goddess Gatumdug, and begged her to interpret the dream to him; and this was the



GUDEA, THE PRIEST-KING OF LAGASH.
Five hundred years before Abraham's time.

interpretation of it. The first great man was the god Ningirsu, and his words were a command to build the temple E-ninnu. The woman who held the reed and the tablet with the star was the goddess Nidaba, and the star was that of the temple's destiny. The warrior with the plan was the god Nindub, and the plan was that of the temple. The brick was the sacred brick of E-ninnu. As for the ass which lay on the ground, said the goddess (and one wonders if she was poking fun at Gudea), that was Gudea himself, who certainly had to bear all the burden of the building.

Once the king had got his commission, he lost no time in carrying it out; and his description of how he gathered materials reads just like the account of the building of Solomon's temple. He sent for cedar-wood to Mount Amanus, and got beams measuring 50 and 60 cubits long. From the land of the Amorites he brought marble and other stone in great blocks, and from the mountains of Kimash he mined copper. Gold dust he brought from the mountains of Khakku, and from the mountain of Barsib he fetched blocks of *nalua* stone, which he used for the foundation of the building, along with asphalt from Magda. Altogether the picture which he gives us of the caravans and ships toiling from all the quarters of the Ancient East with materials for his temple shows us how well organized was trade in those ancient days—better organized than it has ever been since in the same countries.

Along with the materials came the cunning craftsmen to work them—Elamites from Elam, and Susians from Susa, just as Solomon got his skilled workmen from Tyre for his temple at Jerusalem. Altogether he ransacked the whole of the ancient Eastern world, from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Finally, when the temple was built, it was consecrated with magnificent ceremonies, which again recall the scene at the dedication of Solomon's great work. For seven days the king feasted with his people, and all social distinctions were abolished; the maid was the equal of her mistress, and the master and his slave were friends. "The powerful man and the humble man lay down side by side, and in place of evil speech only friendly words were heard; the laws of Nina and Ningirsu were observed, and the rich man did not wrong the orphan, nor did the strong man oppress the widow." One wonders, of course, if things were quite so beautiful and peaceful as Gudea makes out, and how long these halcyon days lasted; but at least the king did his best to make religion not only splendid but real, and to bring its blessings to the poor and the downtrodden as well as to the great—a somewhat

new idea for those days. Perhaps he did not altogether succeed so well as he imagined ; but at least it could be said to him, as it was said to another Eastern king whose dreams were higher than his accomplishments : " Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

Gudea's years must have seemed a kind of Golden Age to the inhabitants of the little city, looked back to all the more fondly because of the troubled times which followed them. Ere long the Indian summer of the city-states waned and passed away. A great empire arose in Abraham's city of Ur, with the last champions of the Sumerian race as its rulers, and absorbed the little independent communities which had done so much for the advance of the human race. Ur was succeeded in its supremacy by the city of Isin ; and then a huge shadow begins to fall across the stage, and Babylon the great, the city of the great Semitic law-giver Hammurabi, begins to rise to the power which has left her name written for ever on the imagination of man as the type of the great world-capital.

CHAPTER XV

TEMPLES AND TOWERS IN BABYLONIA FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO

It was somewhere about 2300 B.C. that the last champions of the old Sumerian stock built up, as I mentioned in the end of last chapter, a great empire in Babylonia, with its capital in "Ur of the Chaldees," the native town of Abraham the Hebrew, from which he set out for the Land of Promise. The empire of Ur did not last for very long, not much more than a century and a quarter, but during that time a great deal of brilliant work was done, and the ancient people of Babylonia, if they had to go down at last before the stronger forces which were pressing in on all sides, at least left a noble monument of their last days of power behind them. The swan-song of the Sumerian race was worthy of a great people who had done work for the uplifting of the human race that can never be forgotten.

The ruins of the great city from which Ur-nammu, the champion of the Sumerians, and his successors ruled the Eastern world for more than a century, have long been known. When a Mesopotamian city falls into ruins it takes a shape quite different from the kind of ruin that we can see in Egypt, or in other lands where stone was used for building. Nearly everything in Babylonia was built of brick, most of it only sun-dried, though the facing walls were often of burnt brick. Now when sun-dried brick is exposed without protection to the rains and storms of centuries, and nothing is done to keep it in repair, it gradually becomes simply a heap of clay, and that is what has happened to all these old cities. The great brick walls of the town and of its temples and palaces have simply become great mounds of clay which was once brick, except where the brickwork was of kiln-burnt brick. Under the mounds lie the remains of whatever stone-work was used to adorn the buildings, and of the metal work which was also used for ornament. As the years rolled on, the winds of the desert drove earth and sand over the great ruined heaps, until the remains of an ancient Babylonian city look like a low range of hills, perhaps 50 or 60 feet high, and covering sometimes a great extent of ground.

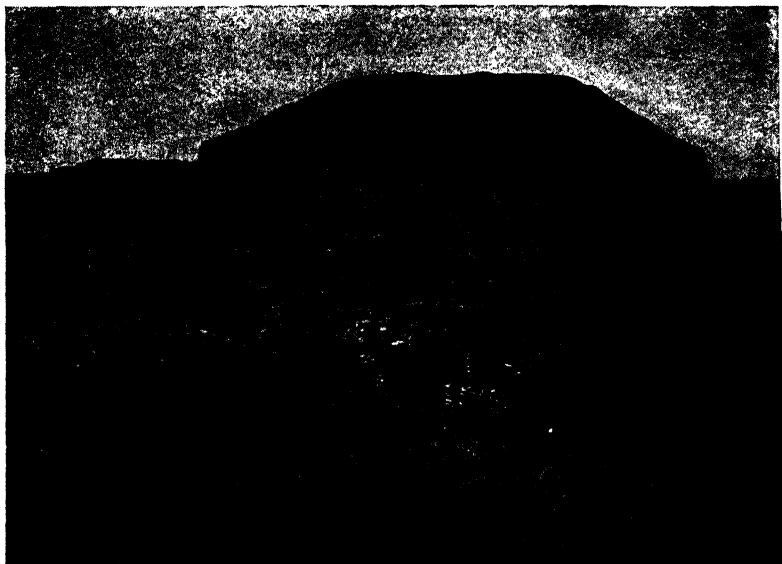
The mounds which mark where Abraham's town once stood have long been known to the Arabs as *Muqayyar*, which means "Plastered with Asphalt"—a name which was given to them because of the asphalt which could be seen in some of the remains of building which appeared in places. About the time of the Crimean War, in the middle of last century, an English explorer, Mr. J. E. Taylor, began to dig at the highest point of the mounds, which reached a height of 70 feet, showing that some great building must once have lain beneath. He soon found evidence that there had been a great temple-tower at this point, and that the temple had belonged to the moon-god, Nannar, who was the city-god of Ur. But it was impossible to carry his work much further, partly because of the want of money, and partly because of the lawlessness of the Arab tribes around; and it was not until between sixty and seventy years had passed that Mr. Taylor's interrupted work was taken up and carried on with thoroughness. In 1919, just after the close of the Great War, Dr. H. R. Hall, of the British Museum, was in the neighbourhood of the old city and did some excavating work at it, and at another mound about four miles away, where he found the ruins of a very ancient little temple, which had once been decorated in a very wonderful manner with figures of bulls in beaten copper, and with scenes of country life carved in limestone and shell. The attention of the world was thus called to the place, and in 1922 the British Museum joined with the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in sending out an expedition to dig in the mounds of Ur, and endeavour to bring to light the buildings and remains of this famous old city. The work has been going on ever since, and has been wonderfully successful.

Perhaps the most striking things that Mr. C. L. Woolley, who has been at the head of the expedition, has unearthed have been those tombs of the most ancient kings of Ur, which have enabled us to picture the scenes at the burial of a great king of the East 5,000 years ago and more, as we did two chapters back. But just as wonderful, though perhaps not as romantic, as this discovery of buried treasure, has been the uncovering of the great temple of Father Nannar, the moon-god, with its massive tower, rising in stages to a height of about 100 feet; its Hall of Justice, where cases were heard; its storehouses and weaving factory; the very kitchen where all the sacrifices were prepared for the temple services; and all the other buildings that belonged to the house of a great god, including the smaller temples which belonged to his consort and other gods related to him, and which nestled under the shadow of the greater building. It is all

more or less ruined, of course, but still one can see enough to make a picture of the huge building as it was in the days of its splendour, when the kings of Ur were lords of the "Four Quarters of the World," as they called themselves, and all the surrounding nations bowed down before them.

When you try to picture the temple of Father Nannar, whose pale crescent shone over the plains of Babylonia, you must forget all about such temples as the beautiful marble shrines which the Greeks reared to their gods. There was not much beauty about the house of a Babylonian god. You see a great raised platform, made of rammed earth and mud-brick, stretching more than 1,200 feet in length, and 600 feet in breadth. It is girdled by a vast wall of mud-brick, faced with burnt brick, many feet in thickness. At intervals the wall is broken by strong towers which command the curtain and allow archers to sweep the whole face of the building with their arrows. The place, in fact, is a great fortress of mighty strength, to which the defenders of the city could retire as their last citadel, when the rest of the city defences had been carried. In the west corner of this citadel rose another platform, girdled by another strong wall, and on it there rose the tower—Ziggurat, the Babylonians called it—which was as much the outstanding feature of a Babylonian temple as its spire is of a cathedral. When you read in the Book of Genesis of the building of the Tower of Babel, you are just reading the description of the building of one of these great temple-towers which rose in the courtyard of every Babylonian temple.

The tower of Father Nannar's temple was not so big as the Tower of Babel, which we now know to have been 300 feet high and the same in breadth and length; but all the same it was a mighty building, which must have looked down on every other structure in the town. It was not a square tower, like the Tower of Babel, but oblong, measuring 195 feet in length and 130 feet in breadth, and its height was 92 feet. It rose in four stages, each a little less in size than the one beneath it, so that it looked rather like a gigantic stairway reaching up towards the sky; and no doubt that was the idea in the minds of the men who built it. Three staircases led up in the front to the top of the first stage; from this height a double stair led to the top of the second and third stages; and the fourth, much smaller than the others, was a shrine. Actually, the tower was the strongest point in the whole strong fortification, and you will get the best idea of it if you think of it as the keep of a huge castle, and the temple courtyard around it as the inner bailey of the stronghold. Facing the stairways



THE GREAT TEMPLE-TOWER OF UR DURING THE EXCAVATIONS.
(*Museum of University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, U.S.A.*)

of the tower rose the temple itself, with its inner and outer courts, its altars where the daily sacrifices were offered, its monastery and convent where the priests and priestesses lived, and its range of kitchens where the sacrifices were prepared and the cooking for the whole huge establishment was done day by day.

Scattered here and there within the fortified wall were several other temples, like the saints' chapels which you see within a Continental cathedral, some of them quite important buildings, though all smaller than Father Nannar's house; while two or three factories, for weaving and working up the materials that were offered to the gods, were built beside the walls in the enclosure, with barracks for the workmen and workwomen. Near the great gate of the courtyard stood a huge storehouse, where clerks were at work all day, keeping tally of the butter and cheese, the sacks of corn and jars of oil which the country-people brought in as payment of their dues to the god. All day long the gate would be thronged with the donkeys of the peasants, laden with panniers of butter and cheese, sacks of corn and vegetables, and bales of wool; and as each load was tumbled out, the clerk in charge

noted down what it consisted of, and how much of each thing there was, made a note of it on a clay tablet which he hung up on a file behind him, and handed another clay tablet inscribed with the totals to the peasant as his receipt. If you remember how Jesus found the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem crowded with cattle-dealers and money-changers, and noisy with all the tumult of a fair, you can imagine the kind of thing that was seen in the temple courts of the moon-god's big house at Ur every day. Perhaps it was from scenes like those, which Abraham must often have seen before he left Babylonia, that the Hebrews got the bad habit of making God's house a house of merchandise.

The butter, cheese, and corn would be easily disposed of; but the wool had to be wrought up into cloth before it could be sold, and so there was a big weaving-mill in one corner of the enclosure, where 165 women and girls were kept constantly at work. If you went through it, you would see the overseer handing out to each woman her allowance of yarn, taking careful note of the amount, so that he might compare it with the length of cloth which she handed in at night. Other overseers saw that each workwoman had her daily rations issued to her. A young girl got so much; a grown woman, who could do a full day's work, got so much more; an old woman, who could not do any more than a young girl, got only the same ration as the girl. If one of the workwomen took ill, she got special sick rations; if she died, her name was kept on the books until the end of the year, when stock was taken; but a note was added to it that no more rations were to be issued. Oh, you may be sure that the priests of Ur did all their business in a thoroughly business-like fashion, and saw to it that whoever suffered it was not Father Nannar or his servants in the priesthood. Isn't it a strange thing to think that we can look back into the courtyard of the moon-god's great temple, almost as if those 4,000 years had been blotted out, and see the smoke of the offerings going up from the altars, and hear the poor peasants arguing with the temple clerks about the amount of tithes they have to pay, and look into the cloth factory, where the looms are clacking all day long, and the big bundles of wool are being spun and woven into stout serviceable cloth for the good citizens of Ur to buy back from the temple stores? It doesn't seem very much like religion to us to-day, does it? And yet, no doubt, there were good men then, who gave their best to the god they knew, and felt themselves the better for the giving.

One of the curiosities of the temple arrangements seems to bring



THOTHIMES III. LEADING HIS ARMY THROUGH THE PASS OF AARUNA

these old Sumerians very much up to date indeed. You know how, when travellers to-day are going through different countries, they carry with them circular notes which can be cashed in the country in which they may happen to be when they want more money. It saves them the trouble of carrying a lot of different kinds of money about with them, and is a great convenience. Well, you can understand how much more troublesome it must have been in these old days, when there was no money, as we understand it, and everything that was needed had to be bought by giving something else for it in exchange, to have to carry about with you a whole caravan-load of the different things that people liked in the different countries that you were going to travel through. African explorers have had to do that in our own day, and a great nuisance it has always been. Well, the messengers of Father Nannar had often to travel through different countries on the errands of the great temple at Ur; but the Sumerian priests were far too clever to allow them to be bothered with a great caravan of goods trailing behind them wherever they went, to pay their way. They furnished their servants with letters of credit, just as we do to-day, and they had arrangements made beforehand with the merchants in the different lands and cities, so that whenever a temple servant from Ur presented one of these clay letters of credit he would get whatever supplies he needed in the place without any more trouble. It took us in Europe a long time to find out how convenient such a method was; but you see that the priests of Abraham's town knew all about it 4,000 years ago!

Another thing that was very much up-to-date in the temple at Ur was the kitchen, which I have already mentioned. It seems very wonderful that we can look into it, after all these centuries have passed, and see all the arrangements just as they were left so long ago! There is the kitchen court, with its brick-lined well, so that the cooks should always have plenty of water at hand, and its big circular hearth on which stood the great cauldron, always kept full and hot, so that hot water should be constantly handy. Between the doors of the two actual kitchen-rooms stands the big chopping-block, made of burnt brick covered with bitumen or pitch. The very cuts and scratches made by the cooks' choppers as they cut up the joints for sacrifice or for the priests' meals are still to be seen quite plainly. You can see where the big round bread-oven stood, though the oven itself has fallen in. Perhaps the most astonishing thing of all is the great kitchen range, with its two furnaces and its circular flues, pierced with holes on which the pots and pans were set, and its steps

up to the top of the range, so contrived that the cooks could stand over the pots and move them quite easily. There wasn't much that you could teach the priests of the moon-god at Ur about cooking 4,000 years ago, any more than there was much that you could teach them about ways of doing business. They were a very much alive and up-to-date community.

About the city which lay around the great citadel of the god of Ur we know less, so far, though the houses dating from Abraham's time, which have been excavated, show us that Terah and his friends at Ur were housed quite as well as the better-off folk in Bagdad to-day. But altogether these diggings at Ur have opened for us a wonderful window, through which we can look back into the life of these far-off ages, and see it all passing before us like the scenes in a cinema. A great poet has written about "magic casements," but there are no magic casements half so magical as those which the spade of the modern excavator is opening up every now and again upon the great days of the once dead past.

You look back through forty centuries out of this window which Mr. Woolley and his helpers have given us, and you see Abraham's town lying there under the silver rays of its great god, Father Nannar, with its strong brick walls, their lofty towers casting long shadows across the plain, and their frowning gates. Within the walls, the houses, solid and comfortable beyond what you would have believed of such a time, cluster closely together, for the Oriental of those days did not believe very much in space and fresh air, any more than does his successor of to-day. The great palace where Ur-nammu, or Shulgi, or Ibi-sin rules over the motley crowd of nations and tribes that owns his sway we have to picture, as yet, from our imagination, or from what we have seen of a Mesopotamian palace in other cities, for so far the home of the Sumerian emperors of Ur has not come to light. But the central feature of the whole picture is the huge dark mass of the house of Nannar—"half house of God, half castle"—a mighty citadel that would hold half a dozen of the greatest of our European cathedrals within its vast walls without cramping them. Over its western corner frowns the dark bulk of the Ziggurat, the keep of the great fortress, rising stage above stage towards the sky, and casting a long pyramid-shaped shadow across the court below. Nannar's courtyard is empty and quiet now, for the great gates have been shut at sunset, and the *Ga-nun-makh*, the Great Storehouse, is asleep until to-morrow's sunrise. But with the first rays of dawn the gates will be thrown open again, and the stream of peasants and donkeys from



THE TOWER AS IT LOOKED WHEN ABRAHAM LIVED BESIDE IT.
(*Museum of University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, U.S.A.*)

all the country round will never cease till sunset ; while the clatter of the looms in the weaving shed will mingle with the shouts and grumbles of the crowd. On the towers and walls of the fortified enclosure you can see the copper helmets and spear-heads of the temple-guard shining in the moonlight ; for Father Nannar is not only the god of his city, but a great war-lord as well, whose house will be, in case of need, the final stronghold of his people.

That the case of need did come we know—in fact, we know that it came twice within a comparatively short time. Ur-nammu's great tower had stood for not much more than a century and a quarter, if even that, when the empire which he had founded came to a sudden and disastrous end. Away in the northern hills which look down upon the Babylonian plain lived a race, far advanced in civilization, but still keeping some of the fierce and untamable spirit of the past ; and the Elamites always looked with jealousy on the fertile lands and rich cities of the plain. It was in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Ibi-sin, the fifth king of the line of Ur-nammu, that the Elamite "came down like a wolf on the fold." Ur was stormed and sacked, and the smashed stone vases and other rich objects which were found beneath the floors of some of the temple rooms tell of the haste and fury of a victorious invader. Ibi-sin, the last of the Sumerian em-

perors, was captured and led in chains into Elam, and the glory of Ur had passed away for ever. Later, the Elamite king, Kudur-mabug, the ancestor of Abraham's Chedorlaomer (Kudur-lagamar), restored the ruined building; but after his time, perhaps about 1900 B.C., there was another invasion and sack. One wonders if it was this second disaster, which must have spelt what seemed final ruin to Ur and its citizens, that was the voice which spoke to Abraham, saying: "Get thee out from thy country, and from thy kindred."

Of course we do not know if it was so, and never shall know, but at least the time suits, for Abraham must have left Mesopotamia much about the time when this second disaster fell upon his native city. If it was so, we can add to our series of pictures of Ur one more: it is that of a little caravan winding slowly away across the Babylonian plain towards the west and the Promised Land. Some of the travellers are looking back sadly to where the mighty tower of Nannar's great temple is flaming red to the sky in conflagration, and they shudder as now and again shouts of victory and shrieks of despair are borne to their ears on the night wind. But the leader is not looking backward, nor listening. He has heard another voice; and in the overthrow of all that seemed solid in the past, he is looking "for the city that hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"—not the Father Nannar of the past, but the eternal Jehovah. Perhaps, of course, it is only a fancy, but at least it is as likely to be near the truth as any other picture you can draw of what has turned out to be one of the greatest events in the history of the world.

In the later days of Ur, when the sceptre had long since passed away to greater cities, a familiar figure appears as one of the rebuilders of the temple of the moon-god—no less than that of the mighty conqueror Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. What is remarkable about the work that he did on the old place is that he changed the whole character of its worship, and instead of keeping up the old fashion of offering his sacrificial meals to the god in private, as used to be the custom, threw open the courts of the temple, so that the whole body of the citizens could see the worship being carried on. In fact, so Mr. Woolley tells us, Nebuchadnezzar made the worship public worship, instead of the private thing it had formerly been. And that brings to one's mind the story of the Golden Image, and how the great king summoned all his people to fall down and worship it. It was not the mere making of the image that brought the young Hebrews into the difficulty—every king did the same thing, more or less; it was the new idea which had come into Nebuchadnezzar's head of making worship such

a public thing that no one could escape taking a part in it. But here again we can only say that it may have been so, and that this may have been the cause of the trial of the Hebrews. Some time or other we may find out from other excavations if this was a regular custom of Nebuchadnezzar or not ; till then we can only say, " Perhaps it was so." Even that is enough to show how interesting the unveiling of these ancient cities may become, and what new light it may shed on the old stories which have been familiar since our childhood.

CHAPTER XVI

A GREAT KING AND HIS LAWS

WHILE the last of the kings of Ur was fighting with the warriors from the mountains of Elam for his throne and freedom, there was growing up in Babylon, to the north, a new race of kings who were destined, for a time, to wipe both Ur and Elam off the slate, and to rule with all the authority of great emperors over the most important empire that the Land of the Rivers had yet seen. It was no longer a question of Sumerian or Semite. The day of the Sumerians was done, and the question that remained to be settled was now whether the Elamite from the north should establish his supremacy over the Babylonian plain, or whether he should be foiled by the new race of Semites from the west—Amorites from Syria, as they may perhaps have been—who had been pressing into northern Babylonia (Akkad). The newcomers had established themselves as kings in Babylon itself perhaps a little more than a century after poor Ibi-sin of Ur had been led away in chains to Elam, and Sumu-abu, the first of their kings of Babylon, had handed on his sceptre to a line of four active and vigorous kings, before the final clash between Elam and Babylon came. In the meantime the Elamites had been gradually making themselves masters of southern Babylonia, where the struggles between the city-states for the headship left them an easy prey to conquerors from without. Kudur-mabug, the King of Elam, did not choose to leave his mountain kingdom for the Babylonian plain; but he set up his sons, first Warad-sin and then Rim-sin, as kings in Larsa, and before long they had cleared the southern plain of all other pretenders, and the lists were set for the great struggle which was to decide whether the Elamite or the Amorite was to be lord of western Asia.

The struggle was a long one, and the two chief antagonists were not unequally matched. The Elamite cause was led by Rim-sin, King of Larsa, and son of Kudur-mabug of Elam. He had no slight advantage in having his father's kingdom so near at hand, lying on the flank of both combatants, so that if he was getting the worst

of it down on the plain he could always call for help to the mountains, and a raid on the flank of Babylon would generally call off his opponent's army. But even without such help, Rim-sin was one of the toughest and most persistent of fighters. He kept up the struggle, beaten again and again though he might be, right up to the very last day of his long reign of sixty-one years. A greater man than he might conquer him ; but Rim-sin was only knocked down to come up again smiling for the next round. In the end he saw his conqueror out, and it was only when he was an old man of perhaps eighty or more that he was finally overthrown and captured by the conqueror's successor. It seems rather a shabby thing that Samsu-iluna of Babylon, who finally mastered the old hero, should have burned such a tough old warrior alive ; but there was not much generosity in the warfare of those wild old days, and perhaps Rim-sin himself might have thought that a chariot of fire was a more fitting end for his sixty years of fire and sword than a lingering death in a Babylonian dungeon.

The romance of the long struggle, so far as we can understand it, belongs to the grey old Elamite fighter ; but all the same the man who beat him, though he could never break him, was one of the greatest men who have ever sat upon a throne, and certainly the greatest, with the possible exception of Nebuchadnezzar, who ever ruled over mighty Babylon, the greatest city of the ancient world. Hammurabi, who made Babylon the centre of that old world of western Asia, has many claims to greatness. He was a great soldier, who knew, what few but the greatest know, not only how to press on in success, but how to hold his hand under a temporary check, until the time should be ripe to advance again ; and who knew also not only how to gain a victory, but to build up a solid empire on the foundation of his triumph. He was a remarkable administrator, who was never too lofty to know the smallest detail of all that was happening in all the provinces of his wide-stretching kingdom, and who got good work out of his subordinates because he taught them that he had his eyes on everything, and that he would accept no work that was not the very best that a man could do. Chiefest of all, he was a great law-giver, who saw to it that all his people should live under the one law, and that nobody should have the excuse of being able to say that he did not know that he was doing wrong when he broke any of the laws. For he had the whole code of laws, by which the empire was to be ruled, carved in hard stone, and set up in different places all over his dominions, so that everybody could see for himself what the law said on any particular point with which he had to do.

I don't imagine for a moment that King Hammurabi made all the laws that he put into his code, or even that he made many of them. Most of them, I fancy, were nearly as old as the Babylonians themselves, and had come down from old Sumerian days, when men first began to be really civilized. Indeed we know that it was so, for pieces of an old Sumerian law-code have been found which are very like some of Hammurabi's laws. But he was the first man who gathered together all these old laws, and made them into one great code which was to hold good in every corner of his great empire, and to mean the same for each race over which he ruled. So you can imagine this great king, or emperor, if you like to call him so, as doing for that old world much the same kind of work as Justinian did for the Roman Empire, or Charlemagne for Europe of the Dark Ages, or Alfred the Great for England, and trying his best to make it sure that every man had a fair chance and equal justice when he had to come to court.

Some of his laws we shall hear about directly, and we shall find that some of them were very stern—indeed, almost cruel, to our minds ; that some of them were very quaint, and almost comical, though there is sound sense in them too, and that the one thing that the great law-giver could not tolerate in any shape or form was bad workmanship or unfaithfulness of any kind ; but in the meantime let us try to get a picture of this great king of 4,000 years back, as he sits in his palace at Babylon, holding all the threads of the administration of his empire in his strong hands, and watching with his keen eyes all that is happening from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

Fortunately the great king has left us a portrait of himself which has survived, almost uninjured, the chances of war and transport to a foreign land, and the ravages of forty centuries. He stands, with one hand raised in adoration, before the seated image of Shamash, the sun-god, to whom he is offering his great code of laws—a tall, erect figure, draped to the feet in a long robe, which is folded over his left arm and falls in long straight pleats. On his head he wears a round head-dress, with a broad, turned-up brim. Deep-set eyes look out from under the shadow of the hat-brim, and heavy eyebrows arch over them. Like all the kings of his race, he is heavily bearded, the beard falling in carefully arranged rows of curls to the middle of his chest. Altogether a stately and imposing figure, by far the most perfect example that we possess of what a king of western Asia looked like in the days of Abraham, and a not unworthy companion to the wonderful series of likenesses of the great Pharaohs of Egypt's Golden Age of the Twelfth Dynasty, which belongs to the same time.

So much for his personal appearance—the actual appearance of a man (it may be) who had come to meet Abraham in battle, and who, most unusually for him, on that occasion got the worst of it. What is the kind of work which he has to do in the world? Much of it, of course, is fighting—the kind of work that every king of those wild days had to do, if he wished to keep his crown on his head and his people safe from slavery. For five years he fights, at the beginning of his reign, mainly against the stubborn Elamite invader, Rim-sin of Larsa. The first four years of the strife are a success for the Babylonian king; but in the fifth year Rim-sin calls his father's army down from the hills to divide the attack of Babylon, and Hammurabi has to put up with a check, though he repels the Elamite raid. Then, like a wise man, he refuses to be hurried into an attempt to shake down the pear before it is ripe. There is plenty of work to do in his own country, and Rim-sin and his allies can wait until he is ready for them. Nineteen years he gives to solid work for the good of Babylonia, then he shows, in ten years of sharp warfare, that he had lost nothing of his old energy. He was growing old by then, but Rim-sin was older still, and his power had not increased as that of the Babylonian had done. The first campaign smashed the army of Elam, so that no further flank attacks needed to be feared from that quarter. The second saw Elam invaded and the remnants of its army crushed; having done which, Hammurabi turned upon his old enemy of Larsa and captured his capital. Rim-sin, however, lived to fight another day, and to give trouble enough long after his conqueror was in his grave, though in the meantime he accepted defeat, and for some years acted as vassal king to Hammurabi. Turning westwards, the great king now added Assyria to his conquests, and did not arrest the march of his armies until he had led them as far as Syria.

Such was his record as a soldier—a record as distinguished as that of any of the other conquerors of the Ancient East. But conquest was the least of Hammurabi's claims to fame; and far more valuable than the story of his wars is that of how he watched over the lands which his might had put into his care, and was a true shepherd of his people. As he sits there in his palace at Babylon, all the affairs of his empire come to him, sooner or later, for final settlement. He has vassal kings, residents, judges, and engineers in every province of the empire; but the last word in every question lies not with any one of them, no matter how efficient he may be, but with his master in Babylon, and each one of them knows, sometimes by sharp experience, that Hammurabi's supervision of his servants is a very real and thorough thing.

Take a sample of the kind of work that this great emperor of western Asia puts through his hands.

His priests and astrologers have told him that the Babylonian calendar is getting so far out of gear with the facts (as, being a lunar calendar, it always did get out of gear periodically with the solar year), and that a leap-year month has to be put into the next year to square things up. Quite right, says Hammurabi; but he does not leave the priests to make the announcement and the necessary arrangements. He draws up the necessary dispatches himself, so that there shall be no slipshod work about them. Here is the message to Sin-iddinam, once a king himself, and now Hammurabi's best soldier, old veteran though he was. Evidently Hammurabi had more faith in Sin-iddinam's soldiership than in his ability as a financier. The year, he writes to his old captain, has a deficiency, and it has been decided to insert an extra month. The month which is beginning will therefore be registered as the second Elul—a repetition of the month which has just passed. But, he adds, though you will thus have an extra month in the year, that does not mean that you can take a month longer in the payment of the tribute which is due from Larsa. That has to be paid at the usual time, leap-year or no leap-year. Probably Sin-iddinam would never have thought of that little point, and the Larsa merchants would have got the better of the Babylonian Treasury by a whole month's interest; but now the old soldier has his orders, and the merchants will be kept up to the scratch.

The next business is that it has come to the king's knowledge (there are few things which do not come to his knowledge) that the district of Shagga is short of corn. Shagga is in the province of Sippar, so a dispatch goes off promptly to the officials of Sippar, bidding them send a supply of corn to the needy district at once. Only, says the king, let them consult the soothsayers first, and let them only move the corn when the omens are favourable. Even the wisest of kings, you see, had his superstitions, and he evidently had a fear at the back of his mind that some local god had been offended, and that the scarcity had been due to his anger.

Next, the king has to deal with another tribute business. Two money-lenders belonging to two towns on the banks of the Tigris have lent money to the local farmers, and have seized their crops to settle the debt. Moreover, they have refused to pay the temple dues which ought to be paid out of the crops to the sun-god of Larsa. The governor of Larsa, as in duty bound, has obliged the tax-collector to make up the deficiency, and the tax-collector has done so, according

to his bargain ; but he now appeals to the king to see that the money-lenders are forced to repay him the amount of their default. The king promptly remits the matter to the local governor of Larsa, with instructions to see justice done, and no doubt the greedy money-lenders spend a good while during the next few weeks wishing that they had not been quite so greedy. Hammurabi has a longer arm than they imagined, and probably they don't risk its being stretched out against them a second time.

Now a letter comes in telling the king about the silting up of the canal at Erech, a matter about which there have already been frequent complaints. Orders had been given to have dredging carried out, but the report says that the dredging has been so badly done that the canal has silted up again, and boats are hindered from reaching Erech. Hammurabi at once sends orders that the canal is to be made navigable within three days ; if it is not, he will have to know the reason why. We may be quite sure that the boats which had been delayed were mooring at the quay of Erech well within the three days.

So it goes on every day, and there is never any pause in the flow of letters, from all parts of the empire, which have all to be dealt with. The mail-wagons, with their load of clay tablets, rumble out and in all day, and Hammurabi's scribes are kept hard at work all day long pressing their sharp-pointed styluses into the soft clay of the king's tablets, and rolling the finished letters up in their clay envelopes for transmission to their destinations. It is scarcely the kind of life that you expected of an Eastern king, is it ? Most of us used to think of such a king as a kind of magnificent wild beast, whose anger was as terrible and as easily roused as that of a tiger, and who did nothing but what pleased himself. When he was not cutting off people's heads he was probably adding another to his collection of wives, or watching some poor wretch getting his eyes put out, or indulging himself in some other gentle pleasure of a similar kind. Well, you see the reality is a little different—at least when the king is a great and good man like Hammurabi. To be a king means for him that you have to work a great deal harder than anybody else in the kingdom, and that there is nobody to say " Thank you " to you when your work is done—if it ever is done.

So now let us turn for a moment to the laws which this great man collected and published all together in one code, so that everybody in the kingdom might know what was right and what was wrong. The copy of them that we have, one of the most famous and priceless things in the world, has come down to us in a curious way. Between

seven and eight hundred years after Hammurabi's death, Babylon, which had known many ups and downs since the time of the great king, was raided by another Elamite king, called Shutruk-nanhunde. One of the trophies which he carried away with him to Susa, his capital, was a great pillar of hard stone, on which Hammurabi had caused his laws to be carved. At the top of the pillar was that picture of the king worshipping the sun-god that I have already described to you, and beneath it the laws ran sideways, column after column across both front and back of the pillar—282 of them in all. The Elamite king chiselled out a few of them on the front to make room for an inscription of his own, which would, no doubt, have told how he carried the pillar away ; but something hindered the work, and his inscription was never cut. It was 3,000 years before the next thing happened to the pillar ; and then in 1901 and 1902 M. J. de Morgan, the famous French explorer, found it smashed into three pieces while he was digging at Susa, and brought it to France, where it is now one of the most precious treasures of the great museum, the Louvre.

Hammurabi begins his laws with a long story of his great deeds. Eastern kings are never in the least bashful in telling you how wonderful and how good they have been. He ends his preface thus : " Hammurabi, the governor, Named by Bel am I, who brought about welfare and abundance . . . the exalted one, who makes supplication to the great gods, the descendant of Sumu-lailu, the powerful son of Sinmuballit, the ancient seed of royalty, the powerful king, the Sun of Babylon, who caused the light to go forth over the lands of Sumer and Akkad ; the king who caused the four quarters of the world to render obedience. . . . When Marduk sent me to rule the people and to bring help to the country, I established law and justice in the land and promoted the welfare of the people." Many other kings of the East, of course, have said much the same things ; the difference between Hammurabi and the most of them was that he really did what he said he had done.

Then follow the laws, of which I can only give you a few specimens. If you were a doctor in Babylonia, you should have had no difficulty in getting in your accounts, for all the fees were laid down by law. " If a doctor operate on a man for a severe wound with a bronze lancet, and save the man's life ; or if he open an abscess in the eye of a man with a bronze lancet " (steel was not known yet, you see), " and save that man's eye, he shall receive ten shekels of silver." That was, if the man operated on was one of the upper class. If he was a middle-class man, the fee for the operation was only five shekels ; and if he

was a slave, it was only two. So far, so good ; but what happened if the doctor made a mess of the operation ? Listen, and say whether you would have liked to be a doctor in Hammurabi's Babylon, after all ! " If a doctor operate on a man for a severe wound, with a bronze lancet, and cause the death of the man ; or if he open an abscess in the eye of a man with a bronze lancet, and destroy the man's eye, they shall cut off his fingers." It seems rather hard, doesn't it, though at least it secured that a bungler did not make a second bungle ! " If a doctor operate on a slave of a freeman for a severe wound, with a bronze lancet, and cause his death, he shall restore a slave of equal value." No, I imagine that there was not a great rush into the medical profession in the days of Hammurabi—the conditions were too risky !

But if the doctors had to give good work at the risk of their fingers, the builder had to put sound work into his houses at a still greater risk. Jerry-building has been known in all days ; but the jerry-builder had a poor time of it in Babylon when Hammurabi ruled. " If a builder build a house for a man, and do not make its construction firm, and the house which he has built collapse and cause the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death. If it cause the death of a son of the owner of the house, they shall put to death a son of that builder. If it cause the death of a slave of the owner of the house, he shall give to the owner of the house a slave of equal value." One imagines that the houses of Babylon under such laws were mainly sound ; they were certainly built on the first known example of the art of town-planning, which we are only now beginning to discover again, after 4,000 years.

The drink problem was a problem in Babylonia then, as it is still a problem with us to-day, but King Hammurabi had ways of dealing with it that would make rather a sensation if they were tried to-day. Drink-sellers in those days were always women, and they were not thought very highly of. Hammurabi had no idea of making peeresses of them, as we do to-day. " If a wine-seller do not receive grain as the price of drink, or if she make the measure for drink smaller than the measure for corn, they shall call that wine-seller to account, and they shall throw her into the water." Nowadays a publican may lose his licence if he allows disorderly conduct in his place ; in Babylon he (or rather she) lost her life ! " If outlaws collect in the house of a wine-seller, and she do not arrest these outlaws and bring them to the palace, that wine-seller shall be put to death ! " Nowadays we should open our eyes wide if we saw a clergyman going into a public-house—and that would be all. In Babylon they made sure that he

(or she) never repeated the offence. "If a priestess . . . enter a wine-shop for a drink, they shall burn that woman!" Well, other times, other ways; but surely "the Trade" must have had the thinnest of thin times in Hammurabi's Babylon.

One of the wisest things in the great king's code of laws was the way in which women, who were usually so poorly treated and protected in the East, had their rights safeguarded. A great scholar has said that under Hammurabi's laws women in Babylon had a position such as they only gained in our own country a few years ago, when the Married Women's Property Acts were passed; and so far as laws could make that true, it is true. Only, on the other hand, a silly, gossiping woman ran risks in Babylon that she does not run with us. "If a woman have not been a careful mistress, have gadded about, have neglected her house, and have belittled her husband, they shall throw that woman into the water." Our forefathers in England used to have the Skimmington for a scold, and in Scotland they had the Branks, both of them quite disagreeable enough; but I fancy that even they would have thought drowning rather a drastic punishment for scolding and gossiping.

I have only told you a few of the curiosities of the wise king's code of laws, but you must not imagine that it was all as quaint or as stern as these examples might suggest. Most of it is very wise; some of it is wonderfully far-seeing; some of it is so modern that we are only now beginning to make laws like it. Much of it must have been in the mind of Moses when he drew up the great law of Israel. And of all the things that have come down to us from ancient Babylon, there is none that does more honour to the greatness and wisdom of the men of the past than just Hammurabi's code.

CHAPTER XVII

JERUSALEM AS ABRAHAM SAW IT

ALL this time, while we have been hearing about the big nations, or the nations which afterwards became big, we have heard nothing about the little land which lay like a bridge between them. What was being done in Palestine during all these ages when great kings were binding all the scattered townships of the Nile valley into one kingdom, and when the city-states in Babylonia were struggling with one another for the supremacy? The trouble is that we know far less about the earliest history of Palestine than even about that of Babylonia, and almost infinitely less than about that of Egypt. For one thing, Palestine never had great cities, on the scale of Babylon or Nineveh, Thebes or Memphis, to leave their gigantic ruins behind them for us to wonder at. Her great cities, even at their greatest, would only have ranked as third-rate towns in either of the great empires of the East. It was not until comparatively late in her story that Solomon made Jerusalem a city of some importance, with two or three famous buildings in it; and it was later still that Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, began to rise on its hilltop of the Watch-tower; while even Jerusalem and Samaria, at their best, were only small copies of the splendours of the mighty cities of Babylonia or Egypt.

Then you have to remember that while the great empires were for many centuries solid unities, each of them one in itself, and devoting all its strength to a single aim, it was entirely different with Palestine. Small as the country is, it was never one as Egypt, or even Babylonia, was one. For ages it was just a battle-ground for the quarrels of scuffling tribes, who were strong enough to prevent each other from becoming masters, but never strong enough to make a real kingdom for themselves. David and Solomon succeeded for a little while in holding the country together with the strong hand; but as soon as these two great men disappeared, the old scuffles and wrangles began again, and Palestine went back to its natural condition as the home of warring tribes.

You can understand that a land like that was not likely to have much history to preserve, and that what little there was would not be likely to be preserved for long in the midst of all the squabbles and tribal fights. It was worse still when the great nations on either side of the little country began to take a hand in its affairs, and to fight out their battles on the bridge between them. Whoever was victor in the age-long struggle between Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley, one thing was sure, that Palestine would be the worst sufferer. And so we find that there is next to no history of the earliest Palestine left, and we can only learn a very little about the peoples who inhabited the country before the Hebrews partly conquered it; and that in later days, after the little gleam of brightness which David's soldier-ship made possible, the history is mostly one of how the country was bullied by Assyria on the one side, or by Egypt on the other, till at last Babylonia, under Nebuchadnezzar, and then Persia under Cyrus, made an end of all the business by swallowing up the little land wholesale and making it a little province of their vast empires.

The first people that we can dimly see in Palestine—very dimly indeed, but perhaps as clearly as we should care to see such unlovely folk—we find settled there nearly 5,000 years ago, roughly speaking about 3000 B.C. It seems quite a long while ago, but just think of what the other nations that we have been watching were doing even as long ago as that. Away in Egypt King Zeser, and his wise architect Imhotep, had planned and reared the Step Pyramid, and Egypt was getting ready for bigger things still; while she was building great ships of 170 feet long for King Seneferu. In Babylonia King A-bar-gi and Queen Sûb-ad had been resting for several centuries in the midst of all that wonderful display of golden splendour and barbarism that we saw at Ur a little time ago; while Eannatum of Lagash was carving the Pillar of the Vultures to tell us the story of his victory over Umma, and the artists of Ur were putting up the frieze of copper bulls in the meadow of stone flowers round the temple of el-Obeid.

Of course, we are not to expect any such wonders of skill and art from our earliest men of Palestine. Even at her best, Palestine never had such things, except when Solomon called in Hiram's Tyrian craftsmen to build the Temple and his own palace, or Ahab, in the northern kingdom, borrowed his father-in-law's Sidonians to build his ivory house; but her earliest folk had no houses at all. They were cave-men, who simply drove out the wild beasts from the many caverns which abound in the limestone rocks of Palestine, and dwelt where the

beasts had dwelt, and with not much more comfort or civilization. They were a little folk, not much over 5 feet in height, thick-skulled and sturdy, as they required to be for such a life. Probably they wore rude cloaks made out of the skins of such wild beasts as they were able to kill with their rude weapons. In their cave homes they used to keep piles of stones handy to throw at the wild beasts who wanted to get back again into the houses from which they had been evicted ; and in one or two of the caves they have left the roughest of rough scratchings on the walls, such as the clumsiest of schoolboys would be ashamed to own as his work or to call pictures. They did not even know enough to make channels round about the mouths of their caves to keep the water from running into them during rain-storms, though there was one very advanced and scientific gentleman who did make a cistern in the middle of his cave-floor to gather the drippings that ran in. Evidently he was too advanced for his time, however, for nobody copied his device ; and they all lived amidst the puddles in the caves and laid in stores of rheumatism for their old age. They had some kind of a religion, which involved the shedding of the blood of some animal, and letting it run down through a channel into the sacred cave where they imagined their dark god of the underworld to live ; and it seems as if the animal they preferred to sacrifice was the pig, which may perhaps account for the horror with which the Hebrews and other peoples of the Semitic race have always regarded the poor inoffensive pig.

And that is pretty much all that we know about these earliest people of Palestine, who were living lives not much better than those of the wild beasts at the time when their neighbours in Mesopotamia and Egypt were doing work that we wonder at even yet. So far as we can tell, they were the same people whom you will find called " Horites " in the Bible.

Five hundred years after we first see them they have totally disappeared. What happened to them nobody can tell exactly ; but when you find a stronger race, and a fierce and cruel one at that, established in the land from which the poor little cave-folk have vanished, it does not take much of a wizard to read the riddle. You imagine the poor fragments of the cave race, after their escape from the slaughter that the conquering Amorites made of them, driven away into the wildest and most desolate parts of the hill country, much as the Picts were driven away before the advance of the stronger and more civilized races in our own land, and at last getting gradually wiped out by punitive expeditions when they made themselves a

nuisance by creeping down at night to carry off cattle and try to get a little of their own back.

So, about 2000 B.C., say roughly 4,000 years ago, the Amorites are firmly settled in the land as masters of Palestine, and the little cave-folk have drifted away into the mists of the past, never to be remembered again, save for a chance reference or two in the Bible, until our own day, when the spade has turned up the pitiful remains of their sordid little story. Not that the Amorites were much better than the folk they drove out and slew. They were certainly a little more advanced. They built houses instead of huddling in caves; they made strong stone walls round about their little towns perched on the hilltops; they traded with Egypt, and borrowed ideas from the clever craftsmen of the Nile valley; they even learned, perhaps from Egyptian engineers, how to cut rather wonderful tunnels in the rock on which their cities were built, so as to be able to get at springs of water within their walls against any time of siege. But so far as one can judge from their towns, the last thing they ever did with the water was to wash with it, and altogether they seem to have been a most unlovely and unattractive race, fierce and cruel, with a religion which demanded cruelty and vice as things well-pleasing to their gods. The Bible speaks again and again about "the iniquity of the Amorite," and when one sees the relics that they have left behind them one has no doubt about it being iniquity right enough. When the Hebrews wiped them out, more or less, as they had wiped out the Horites, I don't think that the world suffered any great loss.

At the same time there must have been among them at least some better folk, with some true ideas about God, and some decency of thought and feeling and living; and it is one of these good men whom we meet in the first appearance that is made in history by the little city which was destined to be more famous than any of the great cities of Babylonia or Egypt—Jerusalem, the Holy City of the three great faiths of the world. The good man whom we thus meet is king of Jerusalem, say somewhere round about 2000 B.C., or perhaps a little later, when Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldees, and was wandering in Palestine, and when King Hammurabi was ruling over the first great empire of Mesopotamia, and getting his great code of laws collected together and carved on its pillar of stone.

You remember the story that is told in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, of how four kings of the East, Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of nations (king of the Goyyim), made war on the kings of Sodom

and Gomorrah and other little sheikhs of Palestine, and captured, among their plunder after the battle, Lot, Abraham's nephew, and all that he had, and how Abraham gathered all his retainers, and surprised the four victorious kings by a night attack, and recaptured his nephew and all the spoil? Well, that story raises up quite a lot of very interesting questions—about who the four kings may have been, for instance. Chedorlaomer is a good Elamite name, which probably stands for Kudur-lagamar, so that he is quite likely a genuine Elamite king. Arioch of Ellasar may be a king of the city of Larsa, which was famous in those days, and Tidal, king of the Goyyim, may be Dudkhalia, king of the Hittites, who were beginning to come to the front at this time. But we have not time to worry about them, and must turn to the fourth. For Amraphel, king of Shinar, is believed by most scholars to be no less than our friend Hammurabi of Babylon (the land of Shinar), the great emperor and law-giver of the Ancient East. We have no other record of this defeat of his, but kings in those days were no fonder than they have always been of recording their defeats, and anyway a little skirmish like Abraham's attack would be scarcely worth mentioning among the big things with which Hammurabi had to deal. It is strange to think of these two great men having met, though only in a night skirmish; and, great as Hammurabi was, his unknown opponent in that surprise and rout has proved in the end to be greater far.

Now as Abraham and his retainers were marching back southwards again with the recaptured loot, they had to pass by Jerusalem, through the valley which afterwards became so famous as the valley of the Kedron, between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. As they came down the valley, they were met first of all by the king of Sodom, who was very grateful to Abraham for what he had done. Abraham, however, paid him but scant respect, for he had his own opinion of Sodom and its king, and wished to have no dealings with either. But then there came down the steep slope of the East Hill, through the ancient water-gate above the Virgin's Fountain, a very different king. It was Melchizedek, the aged priest-king of Jerusalem, and he bore with him bread and wine, partly to refresh Abraham and his men, and partly, perhaps, as an offering to the god who had given him victory. Evidently Abraham believed that El-Elyon (God Most High), whom Melchizedek served, was the same god as the one whose call he was following, for he made no difficulty about receiving the blessing of the old priest, and offered to his god a tenth of the spoils which he had taken. And then the white-haired priest-king climbs the hillside



WHERE MELCHIZEDEK'S JERUSALEM STOOD.

The little bare slope in the centre is the site. The dark hole on the top of the slope marks the excavation of the old wall.

(*Photo, Rev. P. B. Fraser, M.A.*)

again, and vanishes within the water-gate, and we hear no more of Jerusalem for another 600 years, when it comes into view again in a time of sore trouble.

Well then, what was the city like from which the mysterious old priest-king came out to give his blessing to Abraham? We are apt to fancy a great and stately city perched high upon its hills, and a king who can be compared with the great figures that we have been thinking of—Zeser or Khufu in Egypt, or Sargon of Akkad, or Hammurabi in Babylonia. The reality is something very different, and perhaps when we realize how different it is we may be on the way to understand that bigness and greatness are two different things, and that very small things and places may often be very important.

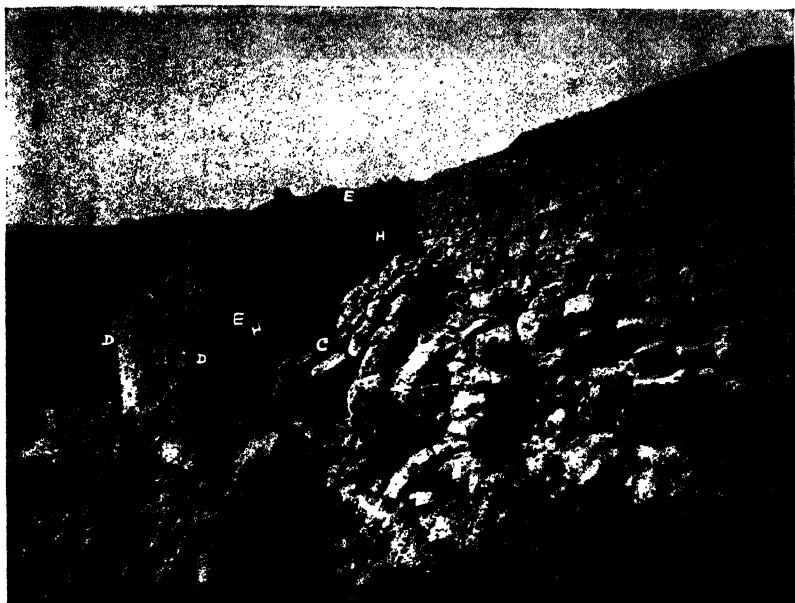
During the last few years various explorers have been working a great deal on the site of the oldest Jerusalem, the city that was there long before David captured the old hill-fortress and made it his capital, and Solomon piled up on the East Hill the courts and sanctuary of the Temple, and his own great palace and his House of the Forest of Lebanon. Bit by bit they have succeeded in digging down to what is left of its ancient walls. Some parts of them they have laid bare, so that you can actually see the very wall from which Melchizedek looked out to see the head of Abraham's column winding down the valley from the north, and the very gate by which he must have come out bearing the bread and wine for the victorious chief. In other parts the walls have altogether vanished, but even there the line of them can partly be traced, and now we know pretty well exactly where the Jerusalem of Abraham's day stood, and how big, or rather how little, it was. I think that the result may surprise you.

You take a map that shows the Jerusalem that we all know about. Even at its biggest you can see that it never was a really big city; but still it looks fairly large and imposing perched up there on its two hills, which stretch down southwards from the mountain mass to the north, just like two fingers thrust out from a clenched hand, with the valley of Hinnom on the west, the valley of the Kedron on the east, and the Tyropœon valley between the two fingers. But the city that Abraham saw occupied only a tiny fraction of even that comparatively small and cramped area. Look at your map again, and you will see most of the eastern side of Jerusalem taken up with what is now called the Haram esh-Sherif, where the Mosque of Omar stands. All that used to be the place where the Temple and its courts stood. Then south of the wall of the old Temple area you will see a little tongue of hill, lower than the site of the Temple, thrusting a point out south-

wards into the bend where the eastern and western valleys sweep round to meet one another. At the north end of the tongue, a little south of the walls of the Temple area, a little valley cuts across part of the tongue of hill slope, and has been continued on one side, where it grew shallow, by a ditch cut in the rock.

That little valley (called the Zedek valley after Melchizedek and Adoni-zedek, two of the ancient kings of Jerusalem) was the northern boundary of the ancient city. From there it stretched along the narrow ridge of the tongue of hill, which you will see marked as Ophel on your map; and it ended at the tip of the tongue, where the hill slopes off into the valley. So now we know pretty exactly what the size of the Jerusalem was that Abraham saw. It measured a trifle less than 1,300 feet in length, and a little less than 150 feet in breadth. If you could squeeze it together a little, taking some of the length and adding it to the breadth, so as to make it more of a square, you would find that the whole city would go quite comfortably into Trafalgar Square, and leave about 75,000 feet of the Square empty. So that you see Abraham's Jerusalem was very far indeed from being the great city that we used to imagine, and its ancient priest-king very far from being the great and powerful figure that one would picture as head of such a place. A little hawk's nest perched upon the top of a cliff, and a little tribal sheikh who was also priest of his handful of citizens, and was very thankful to be delivered, by Abraham's bravery, from a danger that he himself would have been powerless to avert; that is the reality behind that old-world picture from the Book of Genesis.

Do you think that this takes all the romance out of the old story, and brings it down to a very commonplace business? If you do, let me ask you to think for a moment of another very famous city, which has been the emblem of romance all the world over for nearly 3,000 years. Did you ever realize what was the actual size of the Troy that Homer sang of, that defied the Greek heroes for ten long years, and bred a "very perfect gentle knight" like Hector? It was barely half the size of Melchizedek's Jerusalem! Instead of being the mighty fortress that we fancied, it was "a mean little place that you could hide away in an obscure corner of one of our modern cities, and forget all about it." Yet while that is so, we don't think that the romance has gone out of Homer's magic song of heroism, or that Hector is less a hero because he fought and died in defence of a handful of villagers. Romance is not a matter of big armies and mighty kings, but of something in the souls of its heroes that calls to something in our own souls; and greatness is not a business of size or number, but of character



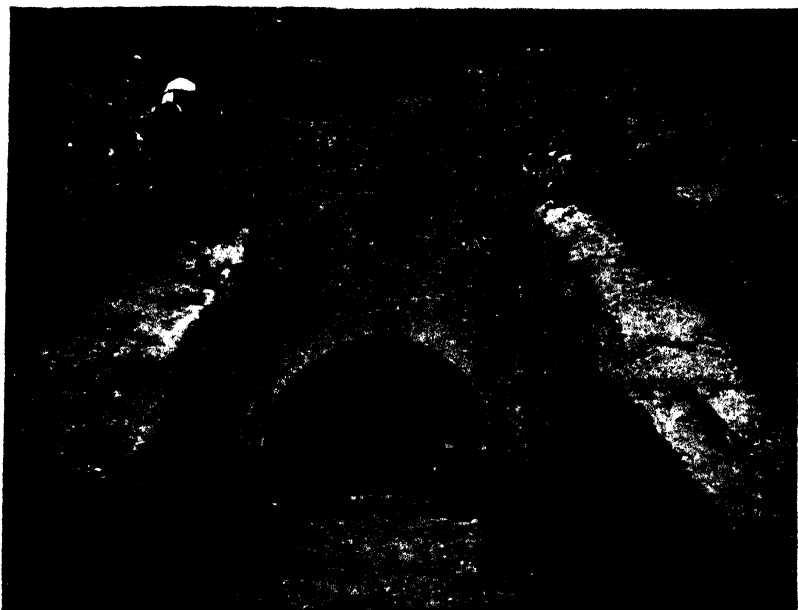
THE ROUGH OLD WALL OF MELCHIZEDEK'S JERUSALEM.

The square-built part with the letters is Solomon's work.

(*Photo, Palestine Exploration Fund.*)

and mind. "Mighty of heart," said John Ruskin once, "mighty of mind, magnanimous: to be this is indeed to be great in life." And when you judge this picture of Abraham and Melchizedek, two petty chiefs of two petty handfuls of folk, meeting under the shadow of the tiny stronghold on the cliff overhead, by this standard, what you see still is two of the greatest men of human history meeting and doing honour to one another, and to the God who had made them what they were. A thing like that can never be small, no matter how insignificant the stage on which it is acted.

But why, in all the world, did the men who built the Jerusalem of Abraham's day ever put it where they did, with a higher slope overlooking it to the north, and with its limits cramped on every side but one by steep valleys? Again, you have to know the countryside if you want to understand their reason. For a reason they had, and a very good one. Jerusalem sits magnificently upon her hills, with the



THE VIRGIN'S FOUNTAIN, JERUSALEM.

The only steady water-supply of the old city.

mountains round about her, as the Psalmist pictured her ; but in all the hillsides round about her there is only one solitary spring of " living water " within reach of the city walls. All the other springs dry up at certain seasons, and cannot be depended on ; but there is one fountain, which is known to-day as " The Virgin's Fountain," and used to be known as " The Dragon Well," which, though its waters come and go in strange fashion, can be depended upon pretty well all the year round. That fountain lies just beneath the slope of Ophel, so that it was quite close to the little fortress on the hill above, and the water-gate by which Melchizedek would come out to meet Abraham was just a stone's throw from it. Archers from the water-gate could make it pretty uncomfortable for any enemy who should try to seize the town's water-supply. So the reason for putting Melchizedek's city on such a cramped little hillside is quite plain : it was put on the only place where the citizens could be near a permanent spring of water.

But then, if the town's archers could make it impossible for an enemy to hold the Virgin's Fountain, the enemy could make it equally impossible for the townsfolk to get down to the fountain to draw water, so long as it lay out in the open. So one of the first things that the builders of Jerusalem did was to make it possible for water to be got without ever having to go beyond the walls of the little hill-fortress at all. The Virgin's Fountain rises in a cave down in the valley below the ancient walls. From the back of the cave the ancient engineers drove a tunnel into the rock for a short distance, and then they sunk a shaft from the top of the hill above down into the tunnel. For 44 feet this shaft rises sheer up from the tunnel behind the fountain, and then it changes into a sloping passage, terminating in a flight of stairs which comes out on the hill within the old walls. So that, by this rather wonderful piece of ancient engineering, the citizens could get down to draw water, and yet be under cover all the time; and if the Virgin's Fountain cave was built up in front no enemy would ever know where it was.

Altogether, with its strong walls piled up on the edge of the hill slope, its valley and ditch cutting it off from the hill on the north, and its water-shaft bringing access to the water-supply within the walls, Melchizedek's Jerusalem, small though it was, must have been a strong little place. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, tells us that the height from the wall of the Temple enclosure to the Kedron valley was so great that you could scarcely see to the bottom of the valley. Well, he was drawing the longbow rather more than a little when he said that, but the height from the top of the walls of Melchizedek's little stronghold to the foot of the valley must have been about 150 feet, quite enough to make it almost impossible to take the city by storm. Almost, but not quite impossible, as the Jebusites found in David's time, when they jeered from the top of their walls at his army down in the valley beneath. "Thou come in hither!" they shouted. "The blind and the lame would be enough to keep thee out." But David was a dangerous man to mock at, and, as we shall perhaps see later, the very water-shaft that was part of their strength proved to be their destruction at last.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

WHEN we last looked at the Nile valley, Egypt was strong and prosperous under the kings of the Old Kingdom, as it is called, though indeed in our picture of the turquoise hunters of Sinai we looked a little further on than the Old Kingdom in one instance. But you know how it is with all things human in this world. Men and nations have their time of growth, their time of flower, their time of ripeness ; and then, just as surely, comes their time of decay.

“ Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.”

So it was with ancient Egypt. You may remember how the boy-Pharaoh, who, as an eight-year-old, wrote the letter about the dwarf from equatorial Africa to his servant Herkhuf, actually lived to be a hundred years old, for ninety-four of which he was king. Well, it would seem as if such extraordinarily long reigns are not good for anybody, and least of all for the nation over which the long-lived king reigns. King Pepy began by being an active and vigorous king, who took an interest in everything, as we saw from his boyish letter ; but as the long years dragged on, and he became older and older, his grip on things began to slacken. He got too old and feeble to travel about and see that the provinces were properly governed ; the great barons far away up or down the river did not care what the old king, whom they never saw, might say about them and their doings, and did just what they pleased. One baron would make war on another with the little army of retainers which each of them kept up, and the whole country was tyrannized over and terrorized by these unruly nobles and their ill-disciplined troops, who were often not much better than robber bands.

At last poor old King Pepy died of mere old age ; one or two shadowy Pharaohs, one of them probably a woman, sat for a little while on the throne, and vanished like ghosts one after the other ;

and at last came complete anarchy. For a while one of the big barons of Middle Egypt, Prince Khety of Siut, tried to prop up on the throne a line of Pharaohs who were mostly called by the same name as himself ; and as he could raise a large army, and had a big river fleet, he managed to uphold the tottering throne for a time. But there was rebellion on both sides of him and his puppet king. The Northerners of the Delta broke away and did as they pleased, and far up-river the princes of Thebes, which up to this time had been only an obscure country town, began to make a bid for the kingship, and to refuse to obey the orders that came from the marionette Pharaoh at Herakleopolis, who moved as Prince Khety of Siut pulled the strings. So the country was broken into three pieces, all fighting at intervals with one another, and there was no real government in any of the three pieces. Altogether it was a most miserable time, when there was no true master in the land, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. One of the wise men of Ancient Egypt wrote a strange book about all the misery of the time, and part of it has survived to our own day. It is just one long lamentation over a nation that seemed to him simply to be falling to pieces. The ploughman, he says, has to go out to his work bearing a shield, because robber archers are everywhere. Indeed, men are frightened to go out into the fields lest they should be slain ; " The Nile is in flood, yet none plougheth for him. Every man saith : ' We know not what hath happened throughout the land.' " So many murdered men were thrown into the river that " the crocodiles are glutted with what they have carried off." Everything was upside down. " Nay, but the land turneth round as doth a potter's wheel." The scum of society had come to the top, and the great folks were cast down in the dust. " Nay, but gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise, carnelian and bronze, are hung about the necks of slave-girls ; but noble ladies beg through the land, and mistresses of houses say, ' Would that we had something to eat ! ' " People had long ceased to laugh, or, when they did, their laughter was terrible to hear and to see. The very pyramids of the Pharaohs were robbed, and the sacred body of the " good god," as the king used to be called, lay stripped in the open day. " Behold, he that was buried as a hawk lieth on an open bier ; the secret of the land, whose place was unknown, is divulged."

In despair the old prophet cries out at last : " There is no pilot in our time. Where is he to-day ? Doth he sleep then ? Behold his might is not seen."

Bad though things were, however, it was only the dark hour before the dawn. The pilot for whom poor Ipuwer cried in vain was to come before long, and, strangely enough, he was to be one of those very Theban princes whose rebellion against the puppet Pharaoh of Herakleopolis had made so much of the trouble. First of all, the rebel Thebans broke through the barrier of the princes of Siut, and swept them and their Pharaoh away to destruction. Then one family of the great lords of Thebes managed to climb to the throne, and to set up what is called the Eleventh Dynasty of Egyptian kings, who, after a struggle, succeeded in making the whole country obey their rule. Some years ago the ruins of the fine old temple which one of these first Theban Pharaohs built in a bay of the Libyan cliffs opposite Thebes was excavated, and now you can see it side by side with the still larger and more beautiful one which was built there 600 years later by the great Egyptian queen, Hatshepsut. Perhaps 100 or 150 years before the time of Abraham they had got Egypt back again into something like order, and she was ready to go forward to greater things once more.

Her leaders in this advance, however, were not to be this first line of Theban princes, but another family, closely related to them. The last king of the line had for his vizier one of these cousins of his, who was himself a very great and powerful baron. The vizier, Amenemhat, could raise an army of 10,000 men when his king sent him on a commission to one of the eastern wadies to get fine stone for his sarcophagus and the rest of the special work about his pyramid; so we need not wonder when the next thing that we see is that the king has disappeared, and that another king called Amenemhat is reigning in his stead. How poor King Mentuhotep IV. did disappear is another matter, and though we don't know much about it, we may guess; but however King Amenemhat may have won the crown, at least there can be no question of the good use to which he put the kingship when he had got it.

There can be no doubt that he was the pilot whom the old prophet longed for. He founded a line of Pharaohs which lasted for more than 200 years, and was one of the greatest lines that Egypt ever had all through her long history; and before he and his descendants had done with their work, they had made the wrecked and ruined land to which they came greater and more prosperous than it had ever been before—perhaps than it ever was again, though there were times when there was more flash and glitter of warlike glory than under the kings of this Twelfth Dynasty. In fact, in everything that makes true prosperity, this time—much about the time when Hammurabi was

doing his big work in Babylon, and Abraham and Isaac were wandering in Palestine—ought to be reckoned the Golden Age of Egypt; an age when she had peace within her own borders, and did not do a great deal of fighting even beyond them, but grew strong and rich and wise.

I am not going to drag you through the long story of those 200 years. King Amenemhat I., the first of the line, found kingship not quite such a fine thing when he actually sat upon the throne as he had perhaps thought it when he coveted it from a lower position. Though he was a wise and good ruler, he had his enemies; and when he was getting an old man their enmity came to a head in a plot to assassinate him. The conspirators had managed to get rid of the palace guards, by bribery or otherwise, and actually got into the room where the old king was lying asleep; but, old man as he was, he was too much for them, and managed to defend himself until help came. What happened to the plotters after that, we are not told; but I fancy that those were the luckiest ones who died quickest. The old warrior saw that his life would never be safe so long as he was king alone; so he called his son Senusert to the throne beside him, and made him joint-king for the last few years of his reign. Now he felt safe, for nobody would kill him off just to put the sceptre into the hands of his son. All the same the plot had pretty well broken the old man's heart. He had done so much for Egypt, and this was how they rewarded him. In his last days he wrote a book of advice for his son, and here is what he tells him: "Be on thy guard against thy subordinates, and never be alone with them. Trust not even thy brother, know not a friend, make no intimates, for that profiteth nothing. I gave to the poor, and nourished the orphan; but it was the man who ate my bread who hated me, and he to whom I gave my hand that roused fear against me." One is sorry for the stout old king, who, however he had got the power, had used it for good when he had it, and yet found the fruit of it so bitter after all.

Then he tells us the story of the night attack. "It was after supper, when night had come; I had taken an hour of repose, and laid me down upon my bed. I was weary, and my heart began to follow after slumber. Then it was that weapons were brandished, and I sprang up to fight like a viper of the desert. When I had seized my weapons, I drave back the rogues." Then he turns to the son from whom he hoped so much: "But," he says, "there is no strength by night, and one cannot fight alone, and success will not come without thee that protectest me." Poor old king, growing pretty weary of it all, when he thinks of the ingratitude of the men for whom he had done

so much ! One is glad to think that his new insurance device served its purpose, and that with his son to be his shield he ended his long day's work in peace. Senusert I., his son, was to know what plots meant also, and had his own troubles before he got firmly seated on the throne when his father was gone ; but the story of that we must leave to be told by itself and by the lips of one of the men who plotted against him and got the worst of it.

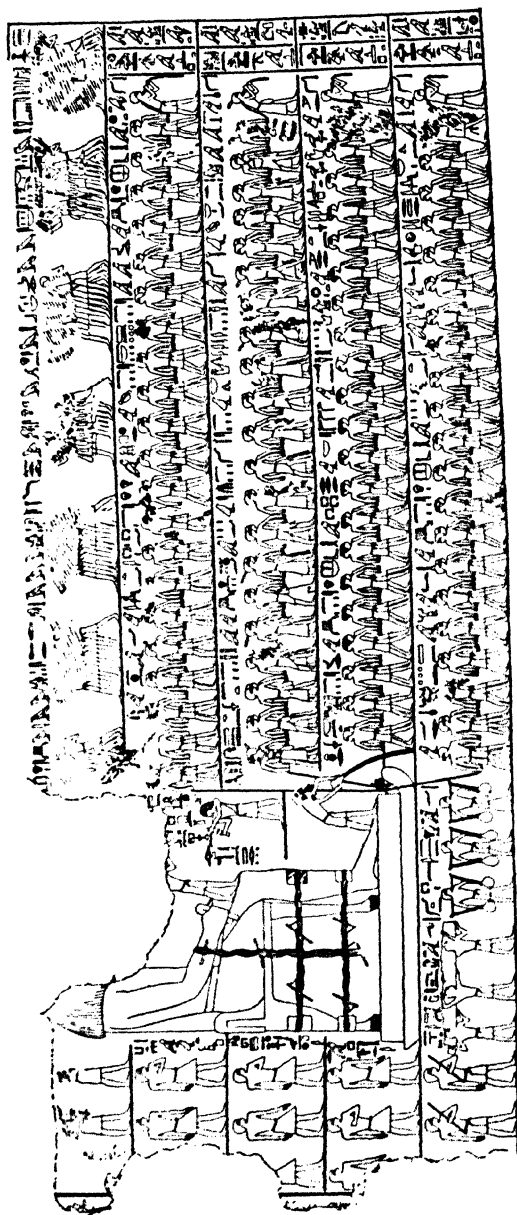
Senusert proved himself to be a good king and a successful soldier. He pushed his troops southwards into the Sûdan, where we have seen the caravan leaders of the Old Kingdom going before them. This, however, was not to be a business of a caravan now and another again, but of a regular occupation of the land ; and in spite of the resistance of the Sûdanese negroes, who came afterwards to make the best troops in the Egyptian army, as they are the best troops in it still to-day, he conquered the land as far south as the Third Cataract. There he left a governor called Hapzefa of Siut, and just the other day an American explorer found out an interesting thing about this early Egyptian proconsul. We knew already that Hapzefa had made most elaborate preparations for his burial in his native town of Siut, as every Egyptian liked to do ; for he has left all the contracts for his tomb-offerings and services carved on the rock of the tomb he had got ready for himself. But now we know that he never occupied the fine tomb at Siut at all. He died and was buried away down at Kerma in the far Sûdan ; and when the great man died, the Sûdanese over whom he had ruled thought that such a mighty chief ought to take a mighty following with him into the spirit-world. So they slaughtered a whole troop of slaves, just as the people of Ur slaughtered the servants of King A-bar-gi, and buried them around the dead governor, and there Dr. Reisner found what was left of that great slaying round the grave of the man who had died so far away from all that he had hoped for.

At home King Senusert did a great deal of building in honour of the gods, and one solitary stone is still standing of what was probably the greatest of his works, the great temple to the sun-god at Heliopolis. Curiously, too, a long account has come down to us, written on a roll of leather by a scribe for practice in writing, of the council where the building of this temple was decided on, and of what the Egyptians called "the stretching of the cord," and we would call the "laying of the foundation stone." And this temple ought to be specially interesting to us all, because it comes into a story that everybody knows and loves—the story of Joseph. You remember that when he had explained Pharaoh's dreams to him, and had been made vizier,

Pharaoh married him to "Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On." On is Heliopolis, so that Asenath's father was the high-priest of this very temple. All that is left standing of the temple is one of the two great obelisks of pink granite which stood before its main gate. It is not quite so tall as Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment, but the difference is only a foot and a half, and if Cleopatra's Needle is a little bigger, the obelisk of On is far older. It was set up about 600 years before Cleopatra's Needle (which has nothing to do with Cleopatra) was set up by Egypt's most famous soldier, Thothmes III. For nearly 4,000 years this shaft of pink granite, 67 feet high, has been standing there at Matariyeh, not far from Cairo—one of the most interesting stones in all the world, for we can be quite sure that its shadow has been cast across the path of one whose story has been familiar to us all our lives—the Hebrew slave who became Egypt's vizier.

After Senusert's busy reign there came two quieter reigns, when the Pharaohs were too busy holding and settling what had been gained to have much time for other work. Indeed, they did not quite succeed in holding all that had been gained in the Sûdan, and the black tribes began to raid down the river and make trouble for the Egyptians near the frontier. But then there came to the throne a famous soldier, who set himself to win back the Sûdan province again, and succeeded to a great extent. He did not quite regain the old frontier, but what he did win he held with a firm grasp, so that there was no more trouble from the negroes for a long time. His name was also Senusert, and he was the third of the name. Later on, when the old Greek globe-trotter, Herodotus, came to Egypt, the priests told him wonderful stories of a great Egyptian conqueror who had conquered Ethiopia, a great deal of Asia, and even a big bit of Europe. He was called Sesostris, they said, and wherever he went on his conquering expeditions he used to set up pillars on which was carved his opinion of the particular people he had been fighting with. If they were brave, he said so; if they were cowardly, he said so too, very plainly and not very politely.

Well, this Sesostris of the priests' story was just Senusert III. Of course they were drawing the longbow pretty hard in what they told about him, for he did very little conquering even in Palestine, to say nothing of the rest of Asia, and none at all in Europe, which he never saw; but you know that geography was not a strong point even with the most learned men of those old days, and countries were apt to get mixed up in the stories that were told. But they had got the pillar



HAULING A COLOSSAL STATUE TO ITS PLACE.

The statue is that of my Lord Tahutihetep, a great nobleman of Egypt in Abraham's time.

part of the story all right, for King Senusert III. did set up just such a pillar at the frontier of the Sûdan province, telling everybody what he thought of the negroes and their fighting. Here is a sentence or two of what he says upon it. "I am a king who says things and does them; what my heart desires is done by my hand. To be keen is valour, to slink back is cowardice, and that man is truly a craven who lets himself be beaten back upon his own frontier. Now the negro hearkens to what is said to him; a bold answer drives him back; when you are keen against him, he runs away; when you slink back, he gets brave and comes forward. But, after all, they are not a people of might—they are poor and broken in spirit. My Majesty has seen them; it is not a lie." King Senusert was not very kind to the reputation of the men whom he had defeated, for they were—as they are still—fine fighters; but you see there was something in the yarn that the priests told Herodotus after all.

Senusert was rather an unusual kind of king, I think—a sharp, downright kind of man who wouldn't stand any nonsense, and had no patience with all the fine things that his courtiers said, unless they did fine things as well. He set up his own statue at the Sûdan frontier, and of course his own people would want to worship it, for Pharaoh was always a god to his subjects; but here is what he said about that. "As for any son of mine who maintains this boundary which My Majesty has made, he is my real son; but as for him who shall let it go, and not fight for it, he is no son of mine, he was never born to me. Now, behold, My Majesty has caused a statue of My Majesty to be set up on this boundary that My Majesty has made; not that ye might worship it, but that ye might fight for it." Rather an uncomfortable kind of king, I should imagine, for the kind of courtier, not unusual in the East (or elsewhere), whose loyalty lies more in fine speeches than in deeds; but he was the man whom Egypt needed, and he did his long day's work manfully. And he won the love of his countrymen, and even that worship of which he was so disdainful; for long centuries after he was dead the hymns of praise that were made for him were still sung, and considered the most perfect specimens of poetry that Egypt ever produced. You will not think much of them, but here is a little bit of one of them, just to show you what a great king's people thought of him:

"How great is the Lord for his city:

He alone is a million, little are other men.

How great is the Lord for his city:

He is like a dike, that keepeth back the river in its floods.

How great is the Lord for his city :

He is like a cool lodge, where a man can sleep till daylight.

He hath come unto us and hath made Egypt to live :

He hath banished its suffering.

He hath come unto us and hath trodden down the foreign countries :

He hath smitten the cave-dwellers that knew not the dread of him ;

He hath come unto us, that we may rear our children, and that we may have peace to bury our aged ones."

Good man as he was, he left a man as good, perhaps better, to succeed him. Senusert had been a soldier prince ; his son Amenemhat III. was a prince of peace, and the great work by which he is remembered is one that was meant to bring not glory but comfort and abundance to all his people. In fact, it was just the same kind of thing that has been done on a still bigger scale in our own time, when our engineers built the Great Dam at Aswan, and the smaller one at Assiut, to hold up the surplus flood-water against the time when the Nile is low, so that it can be let out then to irrigate the fields. About 65 miles above the point of the Delta, a valley opens out westwards from the Nile, and leads into a great hollow, which is about 25 miles from north to south, and 30 from east to west, and sinks to 120 feet below sea-level. Every year the flood-water of the inundation used to flow through the valley into this hollow, making it into a great lake, and though some of it flowed back again as the river fell, the most of it remained, so that the deep part of the hollow was useless except for fishing, and the rest was not much better than swamp. Some earlier kings had tried to build dikes to win back some of this fine fertile land from the water ; but it was Amenemhat III. who saw how to make the great hollow (the Fayum) serve a double purpose.

First of all he built a great dam across the mouth of the valley, and provided it with sluices, so that the water of the inundation could be let through into the hollow, and then held up there till it was needed. Then he built another still bigger dam, 20 miles long, enclosing a great part of the land which used to be marsh, so that it could dry and be used for growing crops. In this way he recovered some 20,000 acres of good land which had before been quite useless, and made it into one of the richest parts of the whole rich Nile valley. When the inundation began to go back, the water which would have run out of the hollow again was still held up by Amenemhat's dam and sluices, and then, when the farmers lower down the Nile began to feel the need of more water for their fields, the sluices were opened, and the flood-water that was gathered behind them was released to help to irrigate the

land, just exactly as it is now done from the two big barrages at Aswan and Assiut. The remains of Amenemhat's great dikes can still be seen after all these centuries.

Now, work like that does not sound so romantic as a story of warfare and battle, but it means plenty and happiness to a country, where the other means sorrow and want. So, though there are no great conquests to put to his name, I think we may rank Amenemhat as really a far greater conqueror than many a warrior king who never did any good to his land by all his fighting. When he had finished his great work at the Fayum, he set up two big statues of himself, each 39 feet high, on the shore of the land he had reclaimed, and there they sat for many centuries looking out across the water of the great reservoir. How they came to grief nobody knows, but now only a few fragments of them remain, and can be seen in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. But King Amenemhat does not need giant statues to keep his memory green ; it will live for ever as that of one of the first of all kings to understand that true kingship lies in doing the best you can for your people, and not in making half the world your slaves.

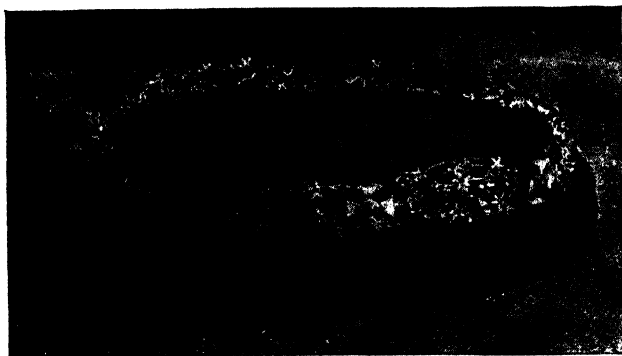
After this good king died, the end of his family line came very quickly. His son only reigned for nine years, and left no son, and when he died, his sister, who succeeded him, only managed to keep the throne for a little more than three years. Then the great line of the Twelfth Dynasty came to an end, and Egypt was to know many troubled years, and many great sorrows and humiliations, before she had such a great line of Pharaohs to govern her again.

One or two things I may tell you about the kings we have been thinking of before we leave them. They were nearly all great builders, like those kings of the Old Kingdom who built the pyramids ; but their building mostly took other forms. We have seen how Senusert I. built the Temple of the Sun where Joseph got his wife. But greater far—in fact, the greatest building that was ever built, even in Egypt—was the huge temple that Amenemhat III. reared to the crocodile-god of the Fayum, where he did his big work. It was the wonder of the world for more than 1,500 years after it was built, and when Herodotus saw it he said that it was more wonderful than all the fine buildings in Greece put together, and that even the pyramids were surpassed by it. We saw, when we were looking at the Great Pyramid, that five of the biggest cathedrals in the world could be packed into the area which the Pyramid covers ; but Amenemhat's great temple covered still more ground than the Pyramid, though, of course, it was not

anything like so high. You remember that St. Peter's, St. Paul's, the Duomo of Florence, York Minster, and Westminster Abbey could all stand on the ground covered by the Pyramid, with a little cathedral like Lichfield thrown in just to fill up the space. Well, the temple of Amenemhat would hold St. Peter's, St. Paul's, Milan Cathedral, Seville Cathedral, the Duomo, Cologne Cathedral, and York Minster, and again you would need to pack Lichfield Cathedral in to make up the space, for Canterbury Cathedral would be just a little too big, and would stick out a bit. There never was a temple or cathedral built that could compare with this for size, and everybody who saw it said that its workmanship was as wonderful as its size. The name that it went by in later days was the Labyrinth, and, curiously enough, it was built much about the time when the other Labyrinth, in Crete, where the Minotaur used to be kept, was taking the shape which it had before its final rebuilding. Now Amenemhat's mighty temple has vanished so utterly that literally not one stone of it is left upon another, and there is not a trace of it except the cement bed for the foundations and the huge heaps of stone chips which were left by the workmen who destroyed it.

Besides their temples, these kings of the Middle Kingdom built pyramids for themselves, like the earlier Pharaohs, but they did this in quite a different style. They had learned, I daresay, that mere size was no protection for the king who slept beneath the pyramid, for even Khufu, in the heart of the Great Pyramid, had been broken in upon by robbers and his body had been destroyed. So they didn't try to pile up huge mountains of stone, like the three giants of Gizeh. They built comparatively modest pyramids, sometimes of brick, though they were faced with stone; but what they relied upon to defeat the robbers was a network of passages and chambers, inside the pyramid, which was like a perfect maze. Sometimes the entrance to all these passages was not anywhere in the pyramid, but away out under some other tomb in the plain beyond, and you could only get at it by lifting the pavement of this other tomb.

Even when the robber had got into the entrance passage, he must have felt as if his brain was turning before he made out the right path to the sepulchre, among all the blind passages and false doorways. You can imagine the rascals groping their way along the dark and stifling corridors, hewing at the plug blocks of stone which barred the way every now and then, and always stopping to listen for the steps of the pyramid guards, while the cold sweat broke out upon their brows at the thought of what would happen to them if they



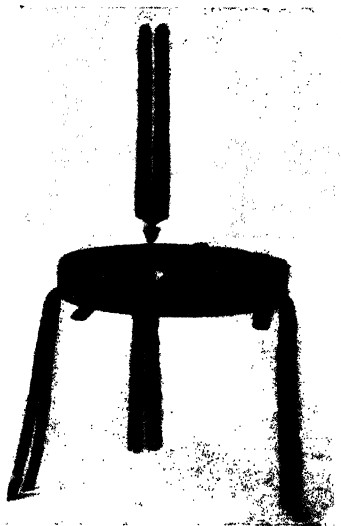
THE DIADEM OF PRINCESS KHNUMIT.

were caught. But, fear or no fear, they kept at their hideous job, quarried their way through huge blocks of hard stone 45 tons in weight, forced an entrance at last into the very sarcophagus chamber where the Pharaoh lay in his great stone coffin, even though the chamber where the coffin stood was made, like Amenemhat's, of one single mighty stone of 110 tons weight, and left nothing of the dead king or his treasures but a few scorched chips that had escaped the fire with which they destroyed all that they could not carry away.

Sometimes, however, the robbers missed their mark, and it is just the fact that they did not manage to pillage everything that has let us see what wonderful workmen and artists were these old Egyptians of the time of Abraham. Now and again our modern excavators, like M. de Morgan, the French explorer, and Sir Flinders Petrie, have managed to light upon some of the treasures which were buried, not with the Pharaohs themselves certainly, but with some of the princesses of their families—the Lady Khnumit, the Lady Meryt, the Lady Sat-hathor, and so on. In Sat-hathor's tomb, for instance, the robbers had actually cut a hole in the stone sarcophagus that held the princess, big enough to let a little boy be pushed through so that he could rifle the dead body—a ghastly task for anybody, let alone a child; but they had missed a little recess in the tomb, close beside the coffin, and there the princess's treasures had lain undisturbed through all the ages, until Mr. Guy Brunton and Sir Flinders Petrie discovered them a few years ago!

We have all seen pictures, at all events, of the beautiful golden treasures of Tutankhamen's tomb, but these are just as beautiful and

wonderful as anything that ever came out of the Valley of the Kings, and they are 600 years older. Here is the coronet that Princess Khnumit may have worn on her dark hair at some great court festival. It is made of gold wire twisted like the tendrils of a flowering bush, only the flowers are made of beautiful coloured stones—carnelian and turquoise and lapis lazuli. Beside it is the more formal diadem that she may have worn at some great religious ceremony—a coronet of Maltese crosses which rise from a band of gold, and have florets of



THE DIADEM OF PRINCESS
SAT-HATHOR.
(*See Flinders Petrie.*)

rare-coloured stone at the crossing of the arms of each cross. Here is the lovely coronet that Princess Sat-hathor wore on state occasions—a simple gold band with rosettes of gold and precious stones all round it, streamers of thin gold plate hanging down from the back and sides, and two tall feathers of gold rising behind, that quiver as the lady walks or moves her head. Or here is her necklace of amethyst beads, with its pendant hanging from it—two hawks in gold and enamel, turquoise and lapis lazuli, and the king's—her father's—name wrought in gold and enamel in the centre. You may go to the Crown Jewel Room at the Tower of London, and you will see there things far more gorgeous and glittering than these jewels of the Egyptian princesses, and perhaps more precious in a way; but the Egyptian diadems are a thousand times more beautiful than anything you

will see at the Tower, and alongside their perfect taste and quiet beauty our crown jewels look vulgar and pretentious.

The people who made and wore these things lived nearly 4,000 years ago. They had no printing, no electric light, no wireless, no railways—no anything that we pride ourselves on so much. They hadn't even a chariot to go abroad in, for the horse didn't find his way into Egypt for quite a while yet. But you can't call them uncivilized. In most things they were quite as civilized as you or I; in some things they were far more civilized than nine out of ten of our modern folk—if good taste is to settle the matter.

CHAPTER XIX

A PRODIGAL SON OF ANCIENT EGYPT

IN our last chapter we saw, just for a moment, that the first two kings of the great Twelfth Dynasty were both troubled with plots, and that after the death of Amenemhat I. his son Senusert was faced with a conspiracy to keep him from the throne. Probably we should never have known anything of this plot, had it not been that one of the high officials of the palace, who may, indeed, have been of princely blood, was connected in some way with it, and was so terrified that he might get into trouble over the business that he fled for his life into Syria, and remained there for many years, only returning at last on the special invitation of the Pharaoh, and with the assurance that the past would be forgotten. Fortunately this wanderer has left us the story of the whole affair, told in semi-poetical form, and it is worth telling over again for its vivid pictures of life in Egypt and Palestine in these far-off days. The story became one of the "best-sellers" of ancient Egyptian literature, and there are quite a number of old manuscripts of it still in existence, four of them written on papyrus, and ten—which, of course, only give fragments of the narrative—on *ostraka*, which is just a Greek word that means mostly what you and I would call scraps of broken crockery. When a story was written down like that, on odds and ends of crockery as well as on costly papyrus rolls, you may be sure that it was popular, and that there was a demand for cheap copies of it.

Sinuhe (his name means "Son of the Sycamore"), who is the hero of the story, was a very big man at the Egyptian court in the days when old King Amenemhat was nearing the end of his life, and had made his son Senusert joint-king along with him. He has not told us whether he was a prince of the blood-royal or not, though there is a good deal in the story that makes it look as if he was; but anyhow he was in high favour, especially with the young king and queen, and he was specially attached to the court of the young queen, Neferu. He had evidently lived in the palace in close attendance on the queen and her children, and was a great favourite with them all. In such a

position he would be one of the first to know of any plot that was being hatched, for in the East, then as now, if there is any mischief brewing anywhere, it may be looked for in the harem. What it was that was going on he has not told us, but it must have been something serious, to judge from his terror about it, and he had kept it quiet even if he had not taken part in it.

The whole explosion took place on the death of the old king, which Sinuhe begins his story. "In the year 30," he says, "on the ninth day of the third month of the inundation, the god" (*i.e.* the king) "went down into the west. King Amenemhat . . . flew away to heaven and was united with the sun, and the divine body was absorbed into God who created him. The palace was hushed, men's hearts were filled with grief, the Two Great Gates were shut, the courtiers sat with heads bowed on their knees, and the nation sorrowed. King Amenemhat's death had happened at a time most favourable for the conspirators in one way, because the young king was away from the palace, but not so favourable in another, because he was at the head of his troops, and that at the end of a victorious campaign which would make him popular with the soldiers. There had been war with the raiding Libyan tribes on the west of the Delta, and Senusert had been in command of the army sent to punish them, "and even now he was returning, having carried away captives of the Libyans, and all manner of cattle without number." It was even so when he reached the western border of the Delta, and as the troops marched across the frontier there came to meet them a messenger from the royal chamberlains of the palace to tell the young king of his father's death. Senusert knew that there would be mischief afterwards and that there was no time to lose if he wanted to secure his crown and save his own head. He gathered a company of his own household troops that he could depend on, and marched at once for Itht-toui, night after night. As Sinuhe puts it: "Not a moment did he linger; the Hawk flew away with his bodyguard, and did not proclaim it until the army."

Secrets, however, are not more easily kept in the East than anywhere else, and if Senusert had his friends in the palace, so had the conspirators. Evidently some of the princes, Senusert's brothers were in the plot, which was meant to set one of them on the throne and their friends at the court sent a message for one of them to come with all speed. And now Sinuhe begins to come into the picture. His conscience had evidently been uneasy, and perhaps he had seen the king's troop marching off through the gathering darkness, and

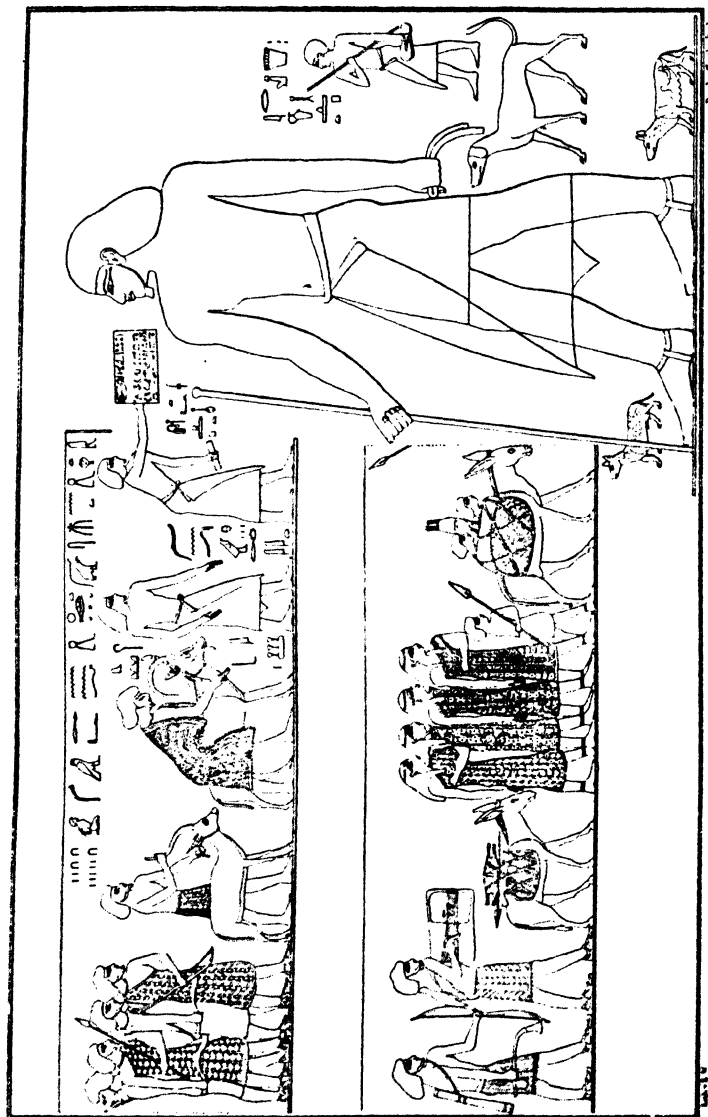


AMEN GOES FORTH FROM HIS TEMPLE

suspected that there was trouble brewing. Anyhow, he was afoot, and wandering uneasily about the camp. You imagine him slinking behind a tent as he sees dim figures approaching, and straining his ears to hear what the messenger from the palace has to say to the disloyal princes. "Behold, I stood and heard his voice as he spake, being but a little way off." At once Sinuhe realized that the fat was in the fire, and realized, too, that it was all up with the plot, since King Senusert had got word and was on the march. He was not a coward, and could do his bit of fighting as well as any man, as he showed later ; but he had no stomach for civil war, and had a very clear understanding of the unpleasant kind of thing that was apt to happen to unsuccessful conspirators in Egypt. Like Alan Breck Stewart, he thought that "this was a very good place to be leaving," and he left without any formalities of leave-taking.

"Then was my heart distraught, mine arms were powerless, and trembling fell on all my limbs." Running was not fast enough for him, nor was the road, even in the darkness, safe. "I got me away thence by leaps and bounds, to seek me a hiding-place ; I betook myself to the bush by the road-side, so that I might not meet any wayfarer." Sinuhe must surely have been in the plot up to the very neck when a mere whisper put him in such a fright. He had no mind to be seen anywhere near the palace. Fighting was sure to be going on there, and the old place that he used to be so fond of would be uncommonly unhealthy for him and his friends for some time to come. Evidently Egypt was no home for a peaceable man like Sinuhe in the meantime, and he would be wise to get out of it as soon as he could. Getting out of Egypt, however, was not quite so easy. First of all, there was the great lake of the Fayum to cross. Somehow he managed to get over to an island, and there he lay all day long under the burning Egyptian sun, as Alan and David Balfour lay among the butterbur and burdock on the island in Allan Water, waiting their chance to cross Stirling Brig. Next morning he made an early start, and was nearly frightened out of his skin by meeting a man who was just as frightened of him—as he might well be, to meet a great officer, in all his war-paint, in such a place and at such a time. "I was afoot early, and when it was day I met a man who stood in the path ; but he shrank from me and was terrified."

Next came the crossing of the Nile, for poor Sinuhe was on the wrong side of everything as well as of his plot. However, he too, like Alan and David, found his boat : "I crossed over in a rudderless stone-barge, with the aid of the breath of the west wind," and you



ASIATIC VISITORS BEING PRESENTED TO MY LORD KHNUMHOTEP, LORD-LIEUTENANT UNDER PHARAOH
OF AN EGYPTIAN COUNTY.

may be sure that no one ever blessed the west wind more fervently than he did when he got at last on the safe side of the river. Not quite so safe either, for he had still one other great danger to face before he got clear of his native land. Down the Isthmus of Suez, the only road eastwards, old King Amenemhat had built a barrier-wall—"The Wall of the Prince"—especially to block the way against the raiding parties of Arabs which used to make themselves a nuisance in Eastern Egypt. There it stood, black and forbidding, against the morning light, and all day long poor Sinuhe had to crouch down among the prickly acacia bushes, and watch the blazing sun flashing back from the spear-point and headpiece of the sentry on the wall, as he paced up and down, and curse old Amenemhat and his wall, and the watchfulness of the guard. "I bowed me down in a thicket for fear lest the sentry of the day on the wall should espy me." By and by, when night fell, he managed to scramble over the wall into the eastern desert, and to get across the isthmus between the Bitter Lakes.

Soon, however, he was to find that he had only jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. Beyond the desert might be safety, but the desert was no place for an armed man who had not a drop of water to drink. Shortly poor Sinuhe came to the end of his tether. "There thirst overtook me, and I fell down; I was parched, my throat burned, and I said: 'This is the taste of death!'" But Providence had better things in store for the despairing man, and help came in the very nick of time. "Then lifted I up mine heart, and braced up my body, for I heard the sound of the lowing of cattle, and descried Beduin. The sheikh of them, who had been in Egypt, recognized me" (Sinuhe, therefore, must have been a pretty prominent figure at court, whom everybody knew). "He gave me water, and made curds for me, and I went with him and his tribe, and they used me kindly."

Now the wanderer was at least safe for the time being, though roughing it in Beduin tents must have been a very different kind of life from what the queen's chamberlain of wealthy Egypt was accustomed to. But, after all, Sinuhe was a soldier too, as we shall see, and "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Months passed in wandering from tribe to tribe before the exile found a home. "Land gave me to land. I set forth from Byblos (on the Phœnician coast) and drew near to Kedemi, and spent half a year there." Then, just as it always happens in adventure stories, the chief of one of the tribes took a fancy to this wandering Egyptian, with his fine weapons and his high-bred look. "Nenshi, the son of Amu, the prince of Upper

Retenu," had a shrewd eye to his own advantage, and knew a good man when he saw him. Sinuhe would be a capital man to lead the tribe in warfare, as he himself was getting a bit old for the job. He put the Egyptian through a stiff catechism as to why he had run away from Egypt; for Egypt had a long arm, and Nenshi did not want to have any trouble over his guest. But Sinuhe, who by this time was thoroughly cured of plotting, told him no more than was good for him to know about the late unhappy business, and was loud in his praise of the new Pharaoh, knowing, of course, that whatever he said would sooner or later find its way back to Egypt, and to Senusert's ears. Finally, as always happens in romances, the chief married the prodigal to his eldest daughter, and behold Sinuhe comfortably settled down as a Beduin chieftain. "It was a goodly land called Yaa. There were figs in it, and vines, and it had more wine than water. Plentiful was its honey, abundant its oil, and all fruits were on its trees. There was barley in it and wheat, and countless cattle of all kinds."

Altogether, Sinuhe had fallen upon his feet. "He made me ruler of a tribe of the best of his country. Bread was made for me for my daily fare, wine for my daily drink, cooked meat and roast fowl, over and above the wild game of the desert; for that, men hunted for me, and laid it before me, besides what spoil my own hounds brought in. I spent many years, and my children grew up to be mighty men, each having his own tribe under him."

It was too much to expect, however, that such prosperity on the part of an incomer would not stir up jealousy among the native Syrians, and ere long their hatred found a champion in the person of a swashbuckler who fancied that an easy victory over the Egyptian upstart would bring him fame and fortune. The result was a regular David and Goliath single combat, whose fortunes Sinuhe tells with much dash and go. "There came a mighty man of Retenu, and challenged me in my tent. He was a matchless champion, and had bullied the whole land of Retenu. He vowed that he would fight with me, he plotted to rob me, he planned to take my cattle as spoil, and his tribe backed him." Sinuhe's father-in-law, the Prince Nenshi, was evidently anxious about the matter, for his credit would depend a good deal on the show which was made by his Egyptian protégé. Sinuhe was not in the least anxious to fight, for he had all that he wanted in the meantime. "I don't know the man," said he, "certainly I have never been a friend of his, nor have I swaggered about his encampment, as he has about mine. I never opened a gate of his, or trampled down his fence. All this is only envy on his part, because

he sees that I am getting on well with you. I am like a bull in a strange herd, and the bull belonging to that herd charges him. But if that man is a bull and loves a fight, he shall learn that I also am a fighting bull, and not afraid to meet him."

Accordingly the duel was arranged, much to the delight of all the neighbourhood, which felt that a fine entertainment was being provided, free of charge. Sinuhe prepared his weapons the night before, and had some practice in archery which served him well next day. "At dawn, when Retenu came, all the tribes had been stirred up, and half the country was gathered together. Every heart burned for me; all the men's wives jabbered at once, and every heart was sore for me, for they said, 'Is there any mighty man able to fight against him?' " The betting, therefore, was heavily against Sinuhe.

Actually, the fight turned out a farce. The clumsy Syrian never had a look in against the skilful Egyptian. "He took his shield, his axe, and his armful of javelins. I turned aside his arrows, which sped uselessly by me. Then we drew near one another, and as he charged me I shot him, and mine arrow stuck in his throat. He gave a yell, and fell on his nose. I slew him with his own axe, and shouted my war-cry standing on his back, while all the Asiatics bellowed. Prince Nenshi hugged me in his arms" (a son-in-law worth having, obviously!). "Then I carried off the dead man's goods, and spoiled his cattle. All that he had planned to do to me, I did to him. I seized all that was in his tent, and plundered his encampment."

His battle over, Sinuhe sat down and looked complacently round him. "All this hath God done," he said piously, "to be gracious to one who had trespassed against Him, and had fled into another land. But to-day the exile's heart is again glad." So much so, that he actually burst out into poetry, and sang his little song of praise:

"Once a fugitive fled in a hurry—

Now the fame of me is in the Residence. (Pharaoh's palace.)

Once a weary man lagged because of hunger—

Now I give bread to my neighbour.

Once a man left his country stripped and bare—

Now I shine white in linen raiment.

Once a man ran his own errands for lack of one to send—

Now I have slaves in plenty.

Fair is my abode, wide is my dwelling-place;

And I am remembered in the Palace."

All that was very well, but Sinuhe was not really content; and the reason of his dissatisfaction will perhaps seem merely funny to

you. He was unhappy because he thought that he would never have a decent funeral so long as he stayed in Syria ! What that meant to an Egyptian you and I will never really understand ; but a true son of Egypt would cheerfully have given up all that he possessed, if only he could be assured of a handsome burial. For he believed that his life and his happiness in the other world, the beautiful Fields of Aaru, depended on the proper funeral rites having been performed over him when he died. To-day we say that we believe in another life to come ; but an Egyptian did not only say that he believed, he did believe with all his heart. And when Sinuhe looked round upon his wide possessions in Syria, he felt that it was all nothing, so long as he would have to die away in this outlandish land, and be wrapped up in a sheepskin, and thrust into a hole in the sand. His soul longed for a fine sarcophagus, with a blue painted sky inside the lid, to whose golden stars he could look up as he lay all the ages in his beautiful carved and painted tomb, with fine linen wrappings for his mummy, and cedar-oil to anoint him.

So the song of praise that he had been singing was changed into a broken-hearted prayer. " O God, whosoever thou art, who didst ordain my flight, be merciful, and bring me back again to the Residence. Peradventure thou wilt suffer me to see again the place where my heart dwelleth ; for what is more important than that my dead body should be buried in the land wherein I was born ? O may the King of Egypt show me mercy, that I may live by his mercy. May I be able to ask the Lady of the Land " (the queen, to whose household he used to be attached) " what her will is. May I hear the commands of her children." A funny kind of religion, you may think ; but you see it was absolutely real to the man, which is the main thing.

Of course Sinuhe had been doing more than praying. You may be sure that there was never an Egyptian trader or ambassador who passed through Syria down to Egypt, who did not get his palm handsomely oiled by the prodigal, with a hint that he might sound Pharaoh about that poor fellow Sinuhe being allowed to come home again. At last the hints produced their fruit, and there came to the land of Yaa no less than a letter from the " good god " Senusert himself. It is too long to repeat, but the gist of it was that Sinuhe might come back. All would be forgotten and forgiven, and he might be sure of a good funeral, as became his rank ! " Come back to Egypt, that thou mayest see the Residence wherein thou didst grow up, that thou mayest kiss the earth at the Two Great Gates, and mingle with the Chamberlains."

Best of all was the luxurious description of the absolutely superb

funeral that awaited the returning prodigal. "A funeral procession is made for thee on the day of burial; the mummy coffin is of gold, with head of lapis lazuli; the blue sky is above thee (painted on the inside of the coffin-lid), and thou art placed on a sledge. Oxen drag thee, singers go before thee, and ritual dances are performed at the door of thy tomb. Thou shalt not die abroad, neither shall the Asiatics bury thee. Thou shalt not be wrapped in a sheepskin. Wherefore bethink thee of thy corpse, and return."

I fancy that most political exiles, if their king invited them to return home, offering as an inducement the promise of a handsome funeral, would rather be in a hurry to get as far as possible away from where that funeral was to take place, for fear that the king might wish to arrange for it happening at once when they returned. But the Egyptians were different. When he got Senusert's letter, Sinuhe nearly went off his head with delight. He stumped round his camp shouting with joy, packed up at once, and set off for Egypt, without a second thought, so far as we can see, for the wife and the children whom he was leaving behind him, except that he left them all his Syrian property. When at last he reached the palace of Pharaoh, the poor man was in a terrible taking. "I found His Majesty on his great throne in the Golden Gateway. When I had stretched myself on my belly, my wits forsook me in his presence, although this god addressed me kindly. I was like a man who sees ghosts in the dusk, my body trembled, my heart was no longer in my carcass, and I knew not whether I was alive or dead." Senusert, however, was in a kindly mood. Long years had passed, he was firmly enough seated on his throne now, and he had no need to worry over memories of poor Sinuhe's connection with the plot that failed so long ago. The poor creature lying there, unshaved and untidy, had paid dearly enough for his folly; it was time to let him see a little of all he had missed during his exile. So the queen and her children were brought in, and His Majesty indulged in a little gentle chaffing of the prodigal. "Said His Majesty to the queen: 'See, this is Sinuhe, who has come back as an Asiatic, a creature of the Beduin.' She uttered an exceeding loud cry, and the royal children shrieked out all together. They said unto His Majesty: 'You don't really mean it! It is not truly he, O King, our Lord.' His Majesty answered: 'Verily, it is he!'" Then the princesses rattled their sacred rattles, and danced a dance of joy round the returning prodigal, praising the goodness of His Majesty; and Sinuhe was led away—to be shaved!

The poor man's joy at being clean again is pathetic, as well as

ludicrous. "Years were made to pass away from my body; I was shaved, and my hair was combed. The load of dirt I had brought in from the desert was given back to it, and my dirty clothes to the Sand-dwellers. I was clothed in the finest linen, and anointed with the best oil. I slept on a bed, and I gave up the sand to them that dwell on it, and wood-oil to them that are fond of smearing themselves therewith."

All that was very well, and very pleasant, no doubt; but the best thing, for whose sake he had really come back, was still to come—the preparation for his funeral! Words almost fail the worthy man as he tries to tell us its splendour. "There was built for me a pyramid. The chief architect began it, the painter painted it, the master-sculptor carved it, the master-builders of the cemetery worked at it. All the fine furniture that ought to be placed in a tomb, my tomb was supplied therewith. And my funeral statue was overlaid with gold, and its kilt was of fine gold." (Just like the statues of Tutankhamen in his tomb.) "It was His Majesty who caused it to be made. There is no common man for whom the like has been done."

"And so live I," concludes the happy man, "rewarded by the king, until the day of my death cometh." One is glad that the poor fellow got his heart's desire at last, though one cannot help wondering what Mrs. Sinuhe and her thriving family of sons away in the land of Yaa thought of it all. With all their cleverness, the Egyptians were a funny folk! But we may be thankful to Sinuhe for his wonderfully vivid picture of how people lived and what they thought and hoped for in Syria and Egypt in those days which sometimes seem so terribly far away in a dead past, and sometimes, when you get a story-teller like this old wanderer, come so near to us again.

CHAPTER XX

AN INVASION FROM THE EAST

OVER the happy and prosperous Egypt of which we have been hearing in the last chapter, there now hung imminent the shadow of a great coming disaster, the worst and the most humiliating that she was ever to know for at least a thousand years. The flood that was now to overwhelm her was set in motion far away to the north-east by the movements of peoples of whom the Egyptians who were overwhelmed never heard. Shortly before the great line of the Senuserts and Amenemhats came to power in Egypt, there began to appear among the Median highlands a formidable race of strangers, who came from the land drained by the great river Oxus in Central Asia. Ere long they were pressing down on the eastern mountain border of the Babylonian kingdom which King Hammurabi had so wisely and patiently built up, and wherever they came the older races of the lands went down before them. For they brought with them a strange new creature which the other races had never seen before, and whose strength and swiftness made the new-comers irresistible on the battlefield. The terrified Babylonians called the new monster "the ass of the mountains," for the strangers came from mountain-land; but you and I know him better as the horse, making his first appearance on the battlefields of the East, where for so long he was to reign supreme.

You can understand what a difference the war-chariots of the invaders, drawn by this swift and terrible creature, made in battle. Just as the Aztec warriors were scattered like chaff, brave men as they were, before the rush of Cortes' handful of horsemen, so the stout Babylonian infantry melted before the whirling charge of the chariot and its bowmen. Soon the great empire which Hammurabi had made fell into the hands of one tribe of the incomers, called the Kassites, and Kassite kings reigned at Babylon for 600 years. Farther west, another tribe of horse-riding barons swept over the uplands of Mesopotamia, and founded a new kingdom called Mitanni, which was to be famous for many a long day. There were not very many of them, but their

possession of the war-horse made them invincible, and over the whole of these lands, where the Semite had now been unquestioned lord for so long, the invaders lorded it, precisely as the handful of Norman knights lorded it in Sicily and southern Italy in the Middle Ages.

But you cannot upset the whole order of things in one country like that without making a difference to other countries as well. The incoming wave of Indo-European horsemen pushed before it a wave of dispossessed Semites, which rolled westwards across the desert and down the Lebanon valleys into Syria, and they in turn drove before them another wave of Syrian Semites, who were forced down into Palestine and out into the desert south of it. Each wave had carried with it as it rolled westwards and southwards the knowledge and use of the terrible creature which had made the first invaders masters of the battlefield, and all the Near East, except the Nile valley, was now growing familiar with the thunder of the war-horse's hoofs, and the whirl of chariot wheels.

And now came the next advance. Palestine and the desert could never hold for long the great flood of humanity that had rolled in upon them, for there was not room in Palestine, and the barren desert can only support a very limited number of folk. Soon invaders and invaded would be involved in a common starvation unless fresh lands could be found over which the wave might spread. Where were such lands to be found? There was only one quarter where there was any hope, and that was across the Isthmus of Suez, and in the Nile valley. Already the Arabs of the desert and of southern Palestine knew Egypt well. They had wandered down into it in times of scarcity, and knew its almost inexhaustible fertility, and had many a time coveted its rich green fields and its bountiful river. Sinueh's story has told us how an Egyptian king had actually been obliged to build a wall across the Isthmus to keep out the desert wanderers, the Sand-dwellers, as the Egyptians scornfully called them; but now no wall was to prove sufficient to hold back the flood.

Had Egypt, at this moment of danger, been still ruled by great men like her Senuserts and Amenemhats, it might have been another story, though even then one doubts whether the Egyptian infantry would have been any more able to stand the shock of the dreadful new engine of war which the invaders brought with them than the Babylonians had been. It was like asking brave men to stand up with their bare hands against rifles and machine-guns. But, as it was, the great Pharaohs were all gone, and their weak successors never

made a fight of it at all. Besides their chariots, the invaders had another advantage. The Egyptians, who had been the first to discover copper, and to make weapons of it, had clung to their copper spears and scimitars. But farther east some of the other nations had been learning to mix copper with tin, and to make a new metal, bronze, which was harder and tougher, and the bronze swords and lance-heads of the incomers were far more than a match for the Egyptian copper. One way and another, the Egyptians were simply swept away before the rush, and there never was what you could really call a battle for the independence of the country at all.

The conquered Egyptians called their conquerors *Hiq-khasut*—"Desert Princes," which is just exactly what they were. By and by the name got worn down, as names will, and at last it got handed down to history as Hyksos, and as there is an old Egyptian word, *Shasu*, which means Beduins or Shepherds, the name Hyksos was interpreted as "Shepherd Princes." So now you know where we are, for everybody has heard of the Hyksos or Shepherd Princes, though nobody knows very much about them.

I don't suppose that there was ever a very great number of them in Egypt. They conquered the land more by the terror of their onrush with their new equipment than by their real strength of numbers, and, indeed, there is no proof that they ever occupied more than a part of it. They claimed a kind of suzerainty over the Upper Valley, and the princes of Thebes held their southern domains as vassal kings under the Hyksos Pharaohs, who lived down in the Delta. But, many or few, they did mischief enough to make the Egyptians hate them, and hate the very name of an Asiatic for centuries. The customs of the cultured Egyptians, of course, they cared nothing for; the gods of Egypt were an abomination to them, for they had their own gods, and especially their chief god, Sutekh. So they destroyed the fine temples which the great builder Pharaohs had reared with such reverent pains; they enslaved the people, wherever they ruled; and in the Delta especially they wrought such ruin that it did not recover for nearly 400 years after they were driven out. You cannot expect a conquered race ever to love its conquerors, but the passion of hatred with which the Egyptians regarded the very name of their conquerors, long after they had driven them out, and far more than avenged their shame upon the Asiatics, tells a terrible story of what the cruelty of the Hyksos must have been when they first burst into the happy valley of the Nile.

Being few, and ruling over a race which outnumbered them many

times over, and had little cause to love them, they had to see to it that they made themselves as secure as possible. They did this, as an old account tells us, by creating a huge fortified camp in the Delta, at a place called Avaris. This they made their headquarters, and from this impregnable stronghold they domineered over the land, so that even the Theban princes, hundreds of miles up the Nile, trembled at the very mention of their name. Some years ago Sir Flinders Petrie discovered what he believes to have been this great camp of the Hyksos, a huge square area surrounded by a great earthwork wall. The long sloping approach to the main entrance could still be traced, and the flanking walls on either side of the upper part of it that were added later, so that the garrison could torment any attacking column with archery from both sides as it advanced up the slope. One can imagine the furious fighting that raged up and down that slope in the days when the Egyptians had plucked up courage again, and were besieging the citadel of their hated tyrants.

Of all the long years during which the intruders ruled over the native Egyptians we know very little. The Hyksos kings soon began to make themselves more or less like the Pharaohs whom they had displaced ; for no one could live in the midst of wonderful works like those of Egypt without being influenced by them whether he liked or not. By and by they began to build temples, as if they had been real Pharaohs, and to encourage learning also. We have an old papyrus dealing with mathematics which belongs to the reign of one of the later Hyksos Pharaohs, though some of you will perhaps think that we do not owe him any thanks for that. But, make themselves as Egyptian as they might, still the native Egyptians hated them, and scorned them only a little less than they hated them. There is an old pillar carved with an inscription of this time, which tells us a little of the fierce hatred towards the oppressor. One of the priests of a town called Koptos had played traitor, and had dealings with the Hyksos tyrants. Here is what was thought and said of him for it, and set up in the temple for an everlasting monument of the traitor's shame. "The enemy has been received in this temple by (a curse upon his name) Teti, son of Minhotep. Let him be deposed from his office in the temple ; even unto his son's son and the heir of his heir let him be cast out. Take away his loaves and his sacred meats : let not his name be remembered in this temple. So shall it be done to one who, like him, hath transgressed with regard to the enemy of his God ! As for any king or any ruler who shall be merciful to him, he shall not receive the White Crown, he shall not wear the Red Crown,

he shall not sit upon the throne of the living, the Two Guardian Goddesses shall not be gracious unto him as their beloved. As for any commandant or official who shall even ask the King (Life! Health! Strength!) to be merciful to him, that official's people, his goods, his fields, shall be taken from him and given to the sacred property of My Father, the God Min, Lord of Koptos."

A little thing like that lets you see that the Hyksos were not precisely popular in Egypt, as indeed you could scarcely expect them to be in the circumstances. All the same, some of them were evidently great and powerful kings. One of them, who was called Khyan, took as one of his titles, "Embracer of Territories," just as the old Babylonian kings used to call themselves "King of the Four Quarters of the World"; and his claim was not altogether just a brag. Not long ago Sir Arthur Evans found his name on the lid of an alabaster ointment box away in far-off Crete, in the royal palace of Knossos, and at the other end of that old Eastern world it has been found again on a stone lion at Bagdad. He must have been a famous king indeed when things bearing his name travelled to places so far away and so wide apart as Crete and Bagdad, though of course that is not to say that he was actually king of either place.

Some of the names of these Hyksos kings (we know very few of them) are curiously like those of some of our Bible friends. Yekeb-hal and Yekeb-ba'al, for instance, just mean "Jacob is God" and "Jacob is Lord." And, indeed, these Desert Princes must have been first cousins, so to speak, of the founders of the Hebrew people. Some scholars believe that it was when these Hyksos Pharaohs with the Hebrew-sounding names were masters of Egypt that Joseph was vizier of the land, and that Jacob, whose name was so highly thought of by the Hyksos kings, came down to live with his clever son. That would make it easy to understand how, when "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph," or, in other words, when the Hyksos Pharaohs and their people were driven out, the Hebrews, who had been friendly with their Hyksos cousins, would be anything but popular with the native Egyptians, who were now on the top of the wave again. But you must remember that this is not much better than guesswork as yet, and that we do not really know when the Hebrews either came down into Egypt, or went out from it, though we are pretty certain that they were really there.

How long the tyrants reigned we do not know with any certainty. Five hundred and eleven years, says the old Egyptian historian, but 500 years is a pretty long time. Some scholars would only give them

a century or so ; but this seems as much too short as the other was too long. Long or short as their tyranny may have been, the Egyptians at last had enough of it, and were driven, in sheer despair, to fight it out with them. How the beginning of the long struggle came about we shall hear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SPLASHING OF THE HIPPOPOTAMI

THE battle of Agincourt, according to Shakespeare, was brought about by a few tennis-balls ; the long Egyptian war of independence, by which the Hyksos tyrants were driven out, had an even more curious cause, if we may believe a very old Egyptian story, which, to add to the curiosity of the thing, has only come down to us in the shape of the school exercise of an Egyptian schoolboy, who copied the tale out more than 3,000 years ago, and copied it very badly. The first cause of the war, according to our schoolboy, was the splashing of the hippopotami in a Theban canal !

Of course that was no more the real cause of the long war than the tennis-balls were the cause of Agincourt. In the one case, as in the other, two races had long been "spoiling for a fight," and grasped at the first excuse to make war on one another. However, let us hear the story as the Egyptians handed it down from generation to generation ; for, if they hated the Hyksos with a perfect hatred, they were correspondingly proud of the brave fighting by which their oppressors were driven out. The Hyksos Pharaohs, as we saw in last chapter, never occupied the whole Nile valley, but kept their main strength concentrated at the great fortified camp at Avaris, or Hat-uart, as the Egyptians called it, away down in the Delta. Perhaps that was wise in one way, for if they had scattered their force all along the long narrow valley they would have been strong nowhere, and might have been swamped by numbers ; but all the same it gave the princes of the south, far up the river, a chance to get strong again and to pluck up courage. They had had to do homage to the conquerors, and were only vassal kings ; but gradually they grew more and more conscious of their own strength, and less and less afraid of their overlords as the chariot and its horses became a more familiar sight in Egypt. They still sent their yearly tribute north to Avaris ; but every year they grudged it more, and no doubt wondered when the time would come when they would not need to humble themselves

before any foreigner. It was to come in a way that they had not expected.

At the time when the trouble began the Hyksos Pharaoh in Avaris was called Apepa. He was the third of the name, and had become as Egyptian as he knew how, building a great temple to his god Sutekh in "good everlasting work," as the Egyptians said, just as if he had been a legitimate Pharaoh of the old stock. Five hundred miles up the river there reigned at Thebes one of the vassal kings, a prince of the old line, whose name was Seqenenra, and who was also the third of his name. He was only ruler of "the Southern City," as our school-boy does not forget to tell us, and though he was a brave man, as he showed in the end, he was not yet ready to break with his overlord and throw down the gauntlet. But King Apepa, on the other hand, wanted a fight. No doubt he was beginning to feel that those Theban princes were getting a bit above themselves, and needed taking down a little. So he made up his mind as to what he would do. He would send up a messenger to Seqenenra, asking him to do something perfectly ridiculous—a thing that nobody could do. Then when Seqenenra answered that he could not do it, he would have an excuse for making war upon him, and "eating him up," before he got too strong to tackle.

If Seqenenra tried to do something to meet the ridiculous request and avoid war, he would only humiliate himself, and look foolish in the eyes of everybody; and altogether Apepa thought that, if he could only find out a sufficiently ridiculous request to make, he would have his vassal "in a cleft stick."

Accordingly the Hyksos king called his council together. "The desire of My Majesty," he said to them, "is to send a messenger to the Southern City in order to pick a quarrel with King Seqenenra." For some time his wise men knew not what to suggest to him. At last one wise man hit upon an idea. Of course it involved a stupendous fib, but that did not matter. "O King, our Lord," said he, "there is a hippopotamus pool in the Southern City, and we cannot get sleep day or night for the noise of the splashing of the hippopotami which is always in our ears." Wonderful hippopotami they must have been, whose splashing could be heard for more than 500 miles; and equally wonderful ears which heard them! However, King Apepa was delighted. He had got the very thing he wanted—something which would either bring war, or else make King Seqenenra look like a fool before all his people. The messenger was packed off at once up the river to Thebes.



EGYPTIAN WEAPONS, TIME OF THE HYKSOS WAR.
The short dagger and piece of a knife on right are of flint.

Now the scene changes to Thebes, and the court of King Seqenenra. "Many days passed after this, and the messenger of King Apepa reached the Prince of the Southern City; and they led him into the presence of the Prince of the Southern City. And One (*i.e.* the king) said to the messenger of King Apepa: 'What is thy message to the Southern City; how didst thou venture to make this journey?' And the messenger said unto him: 'King Apepa sends me to thee to say: "Cause to be silenced the hippopotami which are in the pool of the City, for they do not allow sleep to come to me either by day or by night, for the noise of their splashing is in mine ear."'"

Poor Seqenenra was dumbfounded, as he well might be. He might have said at once, as a king of Israel said of his neighbour the king of Syria: "Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he

seeketh a quarrel against me." He didn't want to fight—at least, not yet; to try to silence the hippopotami was to make himself a laughing-stock to all Egypt. Was ever a poor king in such a dilemma before? "And the Prince of the Southern City was silent and wept a long time, and did not know how to return answer to the messenger of King Apepa." Evidently he tried to make some patched-up excuse, though we don't know what it was, for our schoolboy has left a blank in his exercise here. All we know is that the messenger was sent off to Apepa with some sort of a consent to do whatever the Hyksos king wished. But this was not what the Hyksos wanted, and back came the messenger to Thebes to insist on literal compliance with the original request.

"Then the Prince of the Southern City caused to be summoned his great officers, and likewise all the chief soldiers that he had, and he repeated to them the accusation concerning which King Apepa had sent to him. They were silent with one accord for a long time, and knew not aught to answer him, whether good or bad."

And then, just at the critical moment of the whole story, the school-master called our scholar up and ordered him to copy out some model letters, which were, no doubt, more useful in teaching him to write better, a thing which he certainly needed, but which are not nearly so interesting to us. We are left with the picture of King Seqenenra and his counsellors and chief captains sitting staring at one another with blank faces, and wondering how in all the world they are to get out of this mess.

How they did get out of it we do not exactly know to a certainty; but we can guess, and be fairly sure that we are guessing right, for a somewhat grim reason. Everybody has heard of the wonderful find of royal mummies in July 1881, when Emil Brugsch was lowered down at the end of a rope, held at the top by a tomb-robber, into the black shaft of an unfinished royal tomb, and found, at the end of a long passage, a roomful of Pharaohs, some of them among the greatest kings of Egypt's history. When this amazing treasure-trove had been hoisted out of the shaft, and had travelled down the Nile to Cairo by steamer (the first time that a Pharaoh ever travelled by steamboat), it was found that one of the mummies was that of our friend Seqenenra, whom we left gaping at his counsellors over the challenge of his Hyksos enemy. Whatever else had come of that request to silence the splashing of the hippopotami, war had manifestly come, and the result of it for poor Seqenenra had been that he would never be troubled with such requests any more. He was a

brave man, as I told you, and he fell like a brave man—fighting in the forefront of the battle; for his mummy bore five ghastly wounds on head and face, any one of which might have been his death. A grim ending to our schoolboy's exercise!

Whether the battle in which Seqenenra fell ended in victory or defeat for the Egyptians nobody knows, though the fact that the king's body was carried off safely and wrapped up like a regular mummy, even though the work was hastily done, seems to show that at least the Egyptians had not got the worst of it. But "Freedom's battle once begun" lasted long enough. The Egyptians may have been determined, once they had begun, never to lay down their arms until they had made an end of the Hyksos tyranny; but the Desert Princes were tough foes, and it took many years, and more than one king, before things were made so uncomfortable for them, under siege at last in Avaris, that they accepted terms and marched back to the desert from which they came.

Seqenenra's son Kames, who succeeded the fallen hero, carried on the struggle, but at first with no very great success. Again we are indebted to a schoolboy's copy-book for the only picture we have of King Kames and his war, and it shows us that he had only managed to rescue a comparatively small bit of the valley from the Hyksos enemy, while the Sûdan, which his fathers had won, was held once more by the negroes. Here is our second schoolboy's picture of King Kames trying to stir up a rather laggard set of counsellors. "His Majesty spake thus in his palace to the council of the great men that was with him: 'I should like to know what use my strength is to me. Here is one king sitting in Avaris (the Hyksos), and another in the Sûdan (the negro), and here sit I cheek by jowl with an Asiatic and a Nigger! Each has got his slice of Egypt, and shares the land with me as far as Memphis. Behold, I will grapple with mine enemy, and rip open his stomach, for my desire is to deliver Egypt and to smite the Asiatics!'"

In spite of this remarkably plain speaking, however, the wise men were only half-hearted, and were inclined to let well or ill alone. The native Egyptian never has been fond of war, and these cautious gentlemen thought that so long as they were left in peace and comfort, the mere shame of the thing did not matter much. "The great men of his council spake thus: 'Behold, even although the Asiatics come up-river and put out their tongues all together at us, yet we are in quietness in our bit of Egypt. Our fields are ploughed, our oxen graze in safety, we have wheat so abundant that we feed our swine

on it. Let the Asiatic have his own, and we have ours. But if any man cometh and attacketh us, then we will fight against him.'"

Kames, however, had both a braver heart and a more far-seeing eye than these faint-hearted counsellors of his. "They were displeasing in the heart of His Majesty: 'Your counsel is wrong, and I will fight with the Asiatics. Men shall say of me in Thebes: "Kames, the Protector of Egypt."'" The old copy-book, or rather copy-board, has still a few sentences telling of the war that followed, in the king's own words. We catch a glimpse of him sleeping, "with gladsome heart," on one of his warships on the Nile, and making a surprise attack on his enemy next morning. "When day dawned I was on him like a hawk. While he was yet washing his mouth I drove him back, and destroyed his wall and slew his people. I brought his wife down captive to the quay, and my soldiers were like lions with their prey, with slaves, herds, fat and honey, sharing the plunder with joyful hearts." And then the copy-book is silent once more, and we know nothing of the rest of the war of Kames. It might be as well to point out that we are not to imagine that the Hyksos chieftain used a tooth-brush, but only to understand that he was surprised while sitting at breakfast—a meal which the ancient Egyptians called "the mouth-washing." Apparently the result of Kames's victory was that he succeeded in regaining for Egypt the whole of the valley of the Nile from the upper end of the Delta southward, including the great and famous city of Memphis.

The Delta, however, was still in the hands of the Hyksos Pharaohs, nor could all the efforts of Kames reduce it. When he died (whether in battle or not, we don't know) the great Hyksos fortress still defied all attempts to capture it, and Aahmes, his successor, had a long struggle before he succeeded in driving out the last of the oppressors. We have got a little bit of a picture of those strenuous days of warfare in the story of his life told us by one of the old war-dogs of the Egyptian river-navy—Aahmes, son of Ebana of El-Kab, one of the Egyptian up-river towns, which produced more than one famous warrior in these days of strife. We owe his story to that curious habit of the old Egyptians, which has already helped us so much, of having all their family and personal history carved on the walls of their tombs. Admiral Aahmes begins his tale by telling us of the honours which were bestowed upon him for his valour; for the Egyptians had a regular custom of giving to their bravest soldiers what they called "the gold of valour," a reward which meant for them something like what our Victoria Cross means for us. Admiral Aahmes distinguished

himself again and again in the field, whether in river fighting or in land battles, and must have been almost as much plastered over with decorations as some of our modern officers.

"Chief of the sailors, Aahmes, son of Ebana, triumphant," so his story begins. "He says, 'I will tell you, O all ye people; I will cause you to know the honours which came to me. I was presented with the gold seven times in the presence of the whole land; male and female slaves likewise. I was endowed with very many fields. The fame of one valiant in his achievements shall not perish in the land for ever!'"

"I spent my youth," the old sailor goes on, "in the city of Nekheb" (El-Kab is its modern name), "my father being an officer of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Sequenra, deceased. Then I served as an officer in my father's stead, in the ship called *The Offering*, in the time of the Lord of the Two Lands, Aahmes, while I was still young, not having taken a wife, and while I was still sleeping in the young man's hammock. Then, after I set up a household, I was transferred to the northern fleet (where the active service was going on) because of my valour. I followed the king on foot (as well) when he rode abroad in his chariot."

The next part of the old sailor's story needs a word of explanation. I have been telling you that the Egyptians by this time were as civilized as we are, perhaps more civilized in artistic taste. But there still clung to them some of the fierce and barbarous customs of their rude forefathers, and one of the most unpleasant of these was the way in which they numbered the slain after a battle. They never indulged in nameless barbarities of torture upon the living prisoners, as the Assyrian kings and soldiers habitually did; there is only one instance of such torture in the whole long story of Egypt's wars; but they took a rough-and-ready method of counting the enemy's dead by cutting off a hand or other member from each dead enemy. These were brought in and heaped up before the victorious Pharaoh, scribes reckoning up the numbers as the ghastly trophies were flung upon the pile. It is this horrible custom to which Aahmes refers in his matter-of-fact narrative.

"One besieged the city of Hat-uart (Avaris)," he goes on. "I showed valour on foot before His Majesty, then I was appointed to the ship *Shining-in-Memphis*. One fought on the water in the canal called 'Waterway-of-Avaris.' Then I fought hand to hand. I slew mine enemy, and brought away his hand. It was reported to the royal herald, and Pharaoh gave to me the 'Gold of Valour.' Then

there was again fighting in this place ; I again fought hand to hand there ; I carried away a hand. Pharaoh gave to me the ' Gold of Valour ' for the second time."

Just when things were thus apparently going prosperously for the Egyptian cause, however, trouble arose behind the patriot army up-stream, and Aahmes and his soldiers and sailors had to hurry up-river to meet a new enemy. Who the invader may have been Aahmes does not condescend to inform us ; but the fighting was by water, and took place south of his own city of El-Kab. The encounter must have been a pretty vicious one, for evidently our warrior had to swim after the enemy with whom he was dealing. " One fought in this Egypt, south of this city " (El-Kab, where the old admiral's tomb is). " Then I carried away a living captive, a man ; I plunged into the water, and brought him back as a captive through the streets of the city, having pursued him across the water. This was announced to the royal herald, and His Majesty presented me with the gold in double measure."

The fighting up-river over, you imagine the king and his army racing northwards as fast as the fleet could carry them, to draw their lines around Avaris again. This time there was to be an end for ever of the Hyksos tyranny, and the sacred soil of Egypt was to be cleared of the Asiatic barbarians. The old Egyptian historian Manetho tells us that Aahmes gathered an enormous army of 480,000 men and tried his utmost to reduce the great fortress ; and that just when he was despairing of success, the Hyksos chiefs themselves proposed terms of surrender, and were allowed to march away, 240,000 of them, with their families and property, into the desert and across it to Syria. You may take his huge numbers with a grain of salt. Egypt never raised an army of 480,000 all through her history, and indeed nearly all these accounts of vast armies ought to be divided by ten, perhaps sometimes by a hundred, to get at the actual truth. Moreover, Admiral Aahmes, who was actually there, says not a word about the surrender of the Hyksos stronghold. " One captured Avaris," he says. " I took captive there one man and three women, total four heads ; His Majesty gave them to me for slaves."

With the capture or surrender of the great citadel of the tyrants, the most shameful chapter of Egyptian history came to an end, and Pharaoh was once more master of the whole land from the First Cataract to the Mediterranean. But Aahmes the king was determined to make root and branch work with his enemies, and having driven them out of Egypt, he followed them across the desert and into Palestine. There they were among their own people, and had besides

a strong city called Sharuhén ; but Aahmes was determined to make them pay for all the misery they had caused to Egypt. Sharuhén stood a three years' siege, for the Egyptians had not yet learned the skill in besieging a fortified place that the Assyrians showed later ; but at last it was captured, and the Pharaoh turned southwards again to Egypt, to settle accounts with his enemies in the Sûdan, as he had done with his Asiatic foes. Our business-like friend the admiral tells us the story in three sentences. " One besieged Sharuhén for three years, and His Majesty took it. Then I took captive there two women and one hand. His Majesty gave me the ' Gold of Valour,' besides giving me the captives for slaves."

You remember how Kames described his unhappy position—" sitting cheek by jowl with an Asiatic and a Nigger " ! The Asiatic had been pushed off his seat ; now it was " the Nigger's " turn. " Now after His Majesty had slain the Asiatics," the old sailor goes on, " he went up-river to destroy the Nubian desert dwellers ; His Majesty made a great slaughter among them. Then I took captive there two living men, and carried off three hands " (of men whom he had slain). " His Majesty presented me with the gold in double measure, besides giving me two female slaves. His Majesty sailed downstream, his heart joyous with the might of victory, having seized both Northerners and Southerners."

The troubles of King Aahmes, however, were not yet over. First of all rebellion broke out in Nubia, as soon as His Majesty's back was turned, and then, when that difficulty was got over, some disaffected native Egyptian nobleman stirred up rebellion in Egypt itself. The Ethiopian rebel, who, after all, was only fighting for his country's independence as Pharaoh had fought for that of Egypt, was speedily captured, with all his people, who were shared out as slaves among the victorious army and navy. Admiral Aahmes keeps his grim tally with his usual methodical accuracy. " I carried away two bowmen from a captured ship of the enemy ; His Majesty gave to me five slaves, besides three and a half acres of land in my own city. Like gifts were made to all the sailors." The native rebel got even shorter shrift. " Then came that fallen one, whose name was Teti-an, and who had gathered to himself rebels. His Majesty slew him and all his followers, annihilating them. There were given to me three slaves, and fields amounting to another three and a half acres in my city."

So closes the only story of the great Egyptian war of independence that has come down to us. Egypt has been unlucky in this respect, that she has had no poet to sing the deeds of Seqenenra, Kames, and

Aahmes, as Barbour sung the deeds of the Bruce, or even as Blind Harry sung those of Wallace. Nothing but a tarry old sailor sitting in the sunshine at the door of his house at El-Kab, and ticking off on his fingers the number of men he has slain in his time, and the number of captives he has taken, and the times he was given the "Gold of Valour," or a grant of land, that the tomb-sculptor, who is taking notes of the old man's chatterings, may carve it all upon the wall of the fine tomb that is being hewn out of the El-Kab cliff. I wonder how Nelson's victories would sound if they had found no chronicler but, say, that stout-hearted but also thick-headed officer of whom the great admiral remarked as he saw his ship coming in, "Here comes that blessed fool Berry; now we shall have some fighting!"

Chronicler or no chronicler, however, Egypt felt from end to end of her long valley the rush of new life through all her veins once her hated tyrants were driven out. Perhaps the new generations were never to be able to accomplish anything quite so fine or so beautiful as some of the works of the great men of the Old or the Middle Kingdom. But for once in its life the Egyptian race, the most peace-loving of all the great races that the world has ever known, wakened up to the knowledge that it could actually fight if it tried, and indeed rather liked fighting, now that it had had a taste of the joys of victory; and the next 200 years saw a great Egyptian empire built up, and Egypt sitting proudly as recognized mistress of the whole Near East, envied and hated, no doubt, but fawned upon and flattered by all the kings and nations of the old world.

CHAPTER XXII

AN EGYPTIAN QUEEN ELIZABETH

ONCE their hated Asiatic enemies had been driven out of the land, the Egyptians felt as if the whole world had become new to them. New life and strength were flowing in their veins, the heavy burden which had crushed them to the ground was taken away, and the whole nation stood up erect, stretched its strong arms, and looked about it for a great new adventure which would take the place of the long battle with the Hyksos, and would satisfy the craving for excitement which had grown upon men during these wild years of constant war. Where was the adventure to be found? Naturally there was the old Nubian trail to be followed as a matter of course. First one and then another of the new Theban Pharaohs sailed up-stream with old Admiral Aahmes of El-Kab to lead his fleet for him, and a younger namesake from the same town to help in the fighting, and before long the frontier of the Nubian province had been pushed farther south than ever before, until it reached the Third Cataract, and even beyond. At the Third Cataract King Thothmes I., who was the first Pharaoh to get so far south, built a frontier castle to protect the border, and called it by the boastful name "None-Faces-Him-Among-the-Nine-Bows-Together." Admiral Aahmes got his promotion to flag rank, as we would say, for his skill and courage in managing the ships in the wild water at one of the cataracts, and the old sailor has left us the picture of the young Pharaoh fighting hand to hand against the Nubian chief, and piercing him with his lance. Then you see the fleet sailing north again to Thebes with the dead body of the vanquished Nubian hanging head downwards at the bow of the royal galley, and the victorious king landing in triumph at the capital.

But, after all, it was not in Nubia that the really great adventure was to be found. The Egyptians had known the Sûdan for centuries, and the ground was all familiar to them there. Besides, there was vengeance to be taken, and shame to be wiped out in Asia. It was all very well to have driven the Hyksos out, but why not turn the tables on them, and avenge the insult they had done to the sacred soil of

Egypt by conquering them in their own lands? We saw how, in the first rush of victory, the conqueror Aahmes pursued the Hyksos in their flight into Palestine, and stormed their strong city of Sharuhén after a long siege; but that was only a raid, and probably did not go very far. It was the same Pharaoh, Thothmes I., whom we have just heard of in Nubia, who made up his mind to conquer Palestine and Syria as he had conquered the Sûdan, so that no Asiatic should ever be able again to lift up his head in the presence of an Egyptian. He and his army marched right up through Palestine and Syria, up the Leontes valley between the two Lebanons, over the watershed and down the long Orontes valley until they were out on the plains of the land which the Egyptians called Naharina, the Land of the Rivers, where the great river Euphrates turns eastwards away from the Mediterranean in a huge bend.

So far there had been no serious fighting, but now the Asiatic chiefs gathered an army to fight one great battle for their land. Their force was numerous enough, no doubt; but it was made up of the clans of a score of petty kings, each jealous of his neighbour, and all unaccustomed to united action, and the Egyptian army, one in race and interest, and under a single command, had an easy victory. There was a great slaughter of the routed Asiatics, and prisoners were captured in abundance. Admiral Aahmes, getting a bit old and stiff now after his service under three Pharaohs, still acted as army leader, and won his last decoration. "I was at the head of our troops, and His Majesty beheld my bravery. I brought off a chariot, its horses, and him who was upon it as a living prisoner, and took them to His Majesty. One" (Pharaoh) "presented me with the gold in double measure." Meanwhile his younger namesake was doing even greater feats, being fresher and more vigorous, and his tally at the end of the day was twenty-one severed hands of the dead, one horse, and a chariot.

After his victory King Thothmes marched his army across the plains to the great bend where the Euphrates seemed to mark a natural boundary to his conquests, and here he set up a memorial tablet recording his great deeds. But the Euphrates was a sore puzzle to him. His own great Nile he was perfectly familiar with. It ran from south to north, as a decent river should, and when you went up-stream you were naturally going south. But here was another great river, almost as great as the Nile, which did exactly the opposite, and flowed from north to south, so that when you went up-stream you were going north instead of south. What could you make of a river like that? It seemed a turning upside down of the

laws of Nature. So when the conquering Pharaoh set up his memorial tablet away in farthest off Nubia, to tell of all the strange things he had seen and done in Asia, he spoke of the Euphrates as "that inverted water which goes down-stream in going up-stream." Very proud he was of his triumph. "He brought the ends of the earth into his domain," he says of himself; "he trod its two extremities with his mighty sword, seeking battle; but he found no one to face him. He penetrated valleys which his forefathers knew not, which the wearers of the Double Crown had not seen. His southern boundary is as far as the frontier of this land" (Nubia), "his northern as that inverted water which goes down-stream in going up-stream."

After that great feat, which had changed Egypt from a self-contained kingdom into an empire which must have dealings with all the world, King Thothmes rested upon his laurels, and began to make Egypt beautiful at home. The old temple of Karnak at Thebes, which his forefathers had reared 500 years ago, was not big enough or glorious enough for the conqueror of Asia. So he called to him his clever architect Ineni, and bade him build two huge new gateways in front of the old temple. Between these great portals, with their double towers, he built a great hall, whose lofty roof was supported by columns of cedar wood which he had brought back with him from Lebanon on his return from his Asiatic campaign. By the time his hall and gateways were nearly ready, the king was drawing towards the thirtieth year of his reign, which the Egyptians counted as his jubilee. So he summoned the faithful Ineni again, and sent him up the Nile to the First Cataract at Aswan, to bring down thence two huge blocks of red granite which should be shaped into obelisks and set up before the western gate in commemoration of the jubilee. Ineni built a great barge, 200 feet long and nearly 70 feet broad, and floated the two huge blocks, each 64 feet long and 143 tons in weight, safely down the Nile to Thebes, where he set them up according to his orders. One of them he duly got carved with the king's names and titles, but before the other was completed changes had happened, and Ineni was serving a different master.

Thothmes was now getting an old man. Among his children there was a son named Thothmes like himself, who would naturally have succeeded him; but there was also a daughter, by another queen, who was far cleverer and more vigorous than her half-brother, who was delicate and unhealthy, and another son, also called Thothmes, who had no direct claim to the throne, as his mother was only a commoner. The clever daughter, Hatshepsut, had already, several years

before, been proclaimed as the successor to her father, and though the Egyptians had no love for a woman ruler, they had accepted her as the heir. In order, however, to make things quite secure, she was married to her half-brother, the sickly Thothmes, who succeeded to the throne for a short time, and when he died, or was deposed, she married the younger Thothmes, who had no real claim to the throne. What became of the old king is uncertain, and indeed the whole story of the family at this time is a hopeless mix-up, in which the two half-brothers and their half-sister play a kind of American Post on and off the throne, until at last we see Queen Hatshepsut sitting on the throne for good, married perhaps to her younger half-brother, but keeping him quite in the background, and ruling Egypt herself with a strong and skilful hand. Evidently there was not much love lost among the members of this royal family, and we needn't wonder that in the midst of all their squabbles poor old Thothmes I.'s second obelisk never got inscribed. Queen Hatshepsut and her loving brothers had more to do fighting among themselves than to put up obelisks to their old father, who was well out of the way, they doubtless thought.

Queen Hatshepsut herself reigned for at least twenty years—the first woman ruler of whom we have any real account in history—and she left the mark of her hand pretty clearly on Egypt. She was not a warrior queen, for her father had done the work of fighting pretty thoroughly before she came to the throne, and the Sûdanese and Asiatics whom he had so soundly beaten were in no mood to look for another beating. But there was plenty to do in Egypt itself, and she turned her hand to that with all her energy. All over the land the ravages of the Hyksos wars were still to be seen. Temples were lying in ruins and defiled, the worship of the gods had fallen away in consequence, and there was no end of work to be done to set things right in this respect. The queen tackled the job with heart and soul, and, as a great monarch always seems to do, she got hold of the right men to help her. Old Ineni, who had been her father's right-hand man, was perhaps getting a little past work—at all events he does not tell us of anything that he did for her; but she loaded the old architect with honours and rewards, and he tells us how "she settled the affairs of Egypt according to her own ideas." But in his place she got a couple of famous brothers, called Senmut and Senmen, of whom the first was one of the ablest men that even Egypt ever bred. He was a wonderful architect and engineer, but he was more than that, for in those old days division of labour and specialization had not reached the lengths that they have now, and a great man might be great in



QUEEN HATSHEPSUT'S GREAT TEMPLE AT DER EL-BAHRI.

(Photo, Rev. P. B. Fraser, M.A.)

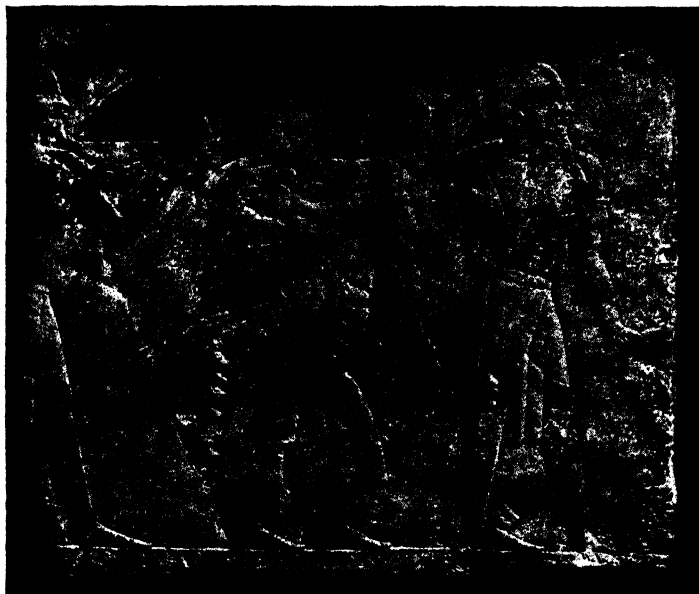
half a dozen different ways. So one of the first jobs that fell to Senmut was that of being tutor to Queen Hatshepsut's young daughter, the Princess Neferura, and to make the thing still quainter, the princess's other tutor was the old soldier Aahmes, the second of the name. You can imagine the two grim old fellows, the great architect and the hard-fisted soldier, putting their two wise heads together over the teething troubles of the little princess, and making pretty poor nurses, in spite of all their wisdom. But Hatshepsut had bigger work for her great man to do than to fill a baby's feeding-bottle or shake her coral.

One of the first things that the queen made up her mind to do was to build a great new temple to Amen on the western side of the Nile at Thebes. There the mighty cliffs of the Libyan hills formed a great bay of salmon-pink rock, with walls hundreds of feet high, at a place called to-day Der el-Bahri, which the Egyptians called Tjesret or Zesret, "The Holy." Here one of her Theban ancestors, the Pharaoh Mentuhetep, had built his own temple 600 years before, and its columned terraces, with the long sloping ramps leading up to them, still stood beneath the cliffs, though sadly neglected and ruined. The great queen and her architect Senmut resolved that they, too, would build a terraced temple like the older one, only far greater and finer. So, instead of the usual towers and gates of an Egyptian temple, there

afternoon tea, of course, but he gave them "bread, beer, wine, meat, fruit—everything found in Egypt, according to the command of His Majesty Himself." (You see the funny way in which the Egyptians had to get over the difficulty of having to speak about a woman sovereign.) After the feast, bargaining went on without any trouble. Great bales of incense gum were stacked on board the Egyptian ships, and were followed by ebony and ivory, gold dust, precious woods, panther skins, and apes. Above all, a number of the precious incense-bearing trees were brought down, their roots as carefully done up in balls of earth as any modern gardener could wish, and were loaded on board. Finally some of the Puntite chiefs and their children, who wished to see the world, followed the goods into the ships, and the expedition started once more for Thebes.

It was a gala day in the Egyptian capital when the ships were seen coming up the river again before the north wind. Bodies of troops, with drums and palm-branches, turned out to escort the returning heroes and the precious cargoes through the crowded streets to the royal palace, where the commander of the expedition had the honour to present everything to "His Majesty Himself" as she sat upon her throne. Then the gold was weighed in great scales, and the huge heaps of incense-gum, higher than a man, were measured with bushel measures, and a huge offering was made to Amen, including a live panther, which had been specially caught for the queen, and thirty-three incense trees, which were duly planted in the courts of the new temple. Finally, Queen Hatshepsut held a great court reception, where Senmut, the builder of her temple, and Nehsi (the negro) her treasurer, who had dispatched the expedition, sat at her feet in the place of honour, and she herself told her nobles the whole story of the voyage, how it began, and how it had succeeded. The great queen was not in the least shy of proclaiming her own merits—indeed, no Egyptian ever was. "I will cause it to be said to posterity," she said, "'how beautiful is she, through whom this has happened,' because I have been so very excellent to Amen, and the heart of my heart has been full of that which is due unto him." Then when she had told of all the wonders which had been gathered, she closed her story with a proud boast, and almost, one imagines, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I have made for Amen a Punt in his garden at Thebes," she said, "just as he commanded me. It is big enough for him to walk about in."

So you can imagine this beautiful temple as it looked when it was made into what the old Orientals used to call a "Paradise" for the



THE PRINCE OF PUNT AND HIS PLUMP WIFE COME TO
MEET THE EGYPTIANS.

queen's god, with its myrrh and incense trees wafting their odours into the warm air, and its white columns shining like marble in the bright sunshine—perhaps the most beautiful building that the Egyptians ever made. It is beautiful still, even in ruin ; but it must have been ten times as lovely when it stood in all the glory of its brilliant colour and its shady groves, with the whole story of the famous voyage carved on its walls in relief and painted with all the hues of Nature. For that was the last thing which Queen Hatshepsut did for the adorning of her "Paradise of Amen." Senmut found for her some skilful artist, and he carved the great picture with infinite patience along one of the terrace walls of the temple, and painted it with amazing realism. You can see the ships on their voyage, with the captain and the pilot anxiously consulting together as they stand at the bow of the foremost ship, and one of the rowers turning his head to say something to the oarsman behind him. Then comes the scene at Punt, with the funny little huts, and the ladders by which

you climbed into them, in the background among the trees, and the watchdogs sitting beneath, the chief coming down to where the Egyptian commander stands, and his plump wife Aty following. She would no doubt be a perfect Helen according to some African ideas of beauty, but to us she looks like a gargoyle, with her hideous rolls of fat. Then the ships are being laden, and the apes are sitting on the top of the cargo with an air of sad resignation, or restlessly prowling about along the spars ; and next you see the fleet in full sail for Egypt again. Finally comes the scene at Thebes : the weighing and measuring of all the treasures, the offering to Amen of his share of the cargoes, and the planting of the incense trees on the terraces of his temple. Never was the story of any voyage of discovery so magnificently published, or with such splendid illustrations, as was this voyage of Queen Hatshepsut's fleet ; nor is it likely that there will ever be such a splendid record of any voyage again. Even to-day, after all the ruin and weathering of more than 3,000 years, it is one of the most wonderful things in the world. As a special favour, Senmut was allowed to have his portrait carved on the walls of the temple he had built—a sign of his favour with the queen which did him no good in the next reign, when Hatshepsut and all that she had honoured was hated, and her very memory blotted out as far as possible.

This famous expedition to the Land of Ghosts was perhaps the most striking event of the great queen's reign, but she left the mark of her hand all over Egypt. One of the things which called for her help continually was the condition of the temples, which from one end of the land to the other had suffered during the long years of Hyksos oppression, and of the war which followed. " I have raised up that which was unfinished," she tells us herself. " I have restored that which was ruins, since the barbarians were in the midst of Avaris of the Northland . . . while they ruled in ignorance of God."

Outside her frontiers everything was peaceful, for the fear of the Egyptian army still lay heavy on the Sûdanese and the Asiatics who had suffered so much at its hands. When she drew near to her fifteenth year as queen, she began to think about celebrating her jubilee, for she had been proclaimed heir to the crown fifteen years before she began to reign, and jubilees were counted from that proclamation, so that the thirty years were nearly up. She, too, must have a pair of great obelisks, like her father, but perhaps with better luck than he had had with his memorials. They should be set up in front of the greatest of all Egyptian temples—the temple of Amen at Karnak, in the middle of Thebes. So the faithful Senmut was called into council

again and sent up the Nile to Aswan to find a pair of suitable blocks of granite for the great work.

I wonder if it is possible for us to realize how great a job it was ? You go along to where Cleopatra's Needle (which never had anything to do with Cleopatra, but with a much bigger person—Thothmes III.) stands on the Thames Embankment, and take a look at the great shaft of granite which our London climate is doing its best to destroy. It is $68\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, not counting the pedestal, and it weighs 187 tons—one single block of stone ! Our modern engineers found it no easy job, with all the mechanical helps of our own day, to handle it and set it up where it stands. But Cleopatra's Needle is a trifle compared with the two shafts that Senmut had to cut out of the quarry, float down the Nile for 135 miles, and set up on their pedestals in the great Temple at Thebes. Each of the two measured over 97 feet in height, and weighed more than 320 tons—nearly half as big again as Cleopatra's Needle, and a good deal more than half as heavy again. Old Ineni, who very likely watched the setting up of the new wonders at Thebes, was proud enough of the shafts he put up for Hatshepsut's father, but the obelisks of Thothmes I. were child's play compared with his daughter's two giants. Hatshepsut's obelisks were two and a quarter times the weight of her father's ones.

Think of all the difficulties poor Senmut had to overcome. First of all, he had to find two lengths of rock in the quarry which would yield such huge stones ; and they had to be flawless, without a single crack in all the almost hundred feet length of each. Then they had to be cut, or rather hammered, out of the native rock by hundreds of men, using wooden rammers capped with balls of very hard stone. Then the great blocks had to be hoisted out of their beds in the quarry, and dragged on rollers along an embankment, which had to be specially built, and well built, to carry such weights. The long shafts, granite though they were, had to be most tenderly handled, for their length and slenderness made them very easy to break. Meanwhile Senmut had been building a mighty barge to float them down the river. Ineni's barge, you remember, was more than 200 feet long and 70 broad ; Senmut's would need to be still bigger, probably at least half as big again. Then, when the shafts had been got on board (and nobody knows how that was managed), the inundation would help the toiling engineers and lift the huge barge for them ; and probably the easiest time that Senmut had during all the business was as he lay on the barge and watched the tow-boats tugging it down the river. When the barge reached Thebes the whole business had to be gone through

again. The shafts, each on its sledge of wood, with rollers underneath, were tugged by an army of men from the river bank to their appointed place in the temple ; and then came the most anxious job of all. The two pedestals had been got ready for them, but how these huge masses of granite, each more than 320 tons in weight, were to be set square upon the narrow blocks which were to bear them must have given Senmut many a nightmare. How he did it we don't exactly know, but somehow or other it was done, and the two slender shafts towered up into the air, each carved with its long inscription to the glory of the great queen, and each tipped with a cap of mixed gold and silver. You can imagine how all Thebes would take a holiday on the day when the two obelisks were consecrated, and what rejoicings there would be. But I fancy that there was one man in the crowd who had a very sore heart that day, and that was the architect who had done so splendid a piece of work. Senmut was disconsolate, for one of his obelisks had not come down square on its pedestal. It was perfectly upright, but its corners were not quite square with the corners of the block beneath it. The error was only a trifle, and very likely nobody knew about it except Senmut himself, and perhaps one or two of the other skilled engineers who did such jobs ; but I fancy that the great man never looked at that obelisk, just ever so little off the square, without feeling sore over the mistake, and wishing that he could do it all over again. The quaintest thing about it all is that the other obelisk, which for all we know stood quite square, fell and broke long ago ; but the shaft that was squint on its base still stands, and bears witness to the blunder. So that poor Senmut, if he knows about things still, has had that slip of his rubbed into his memory for more than 3,000 years. It does seem rather hard on a good man, doesn't it ?

However, nobody seems to have told on Senmut, not even his dearest friend, for Queen Hatshepsut was quite pleased with his work. Indeed she was more than pleased, she was so proud about it that she had to have the whole story of the business carved round the base of the obelisk that still stands, so that everybody might know all about it. She wished everybody to know that there was no shoddy work about her jubilee gifts to her god, and so she swears a mighty oath that each shaft is of a single stone, with no dodge of joining about it. " I swear," she says, " as God loves me, and my father Amen favours me . . . and as I hope for everlasting life, that these two great obelisks which My Majesty has wrought for my father Amen, are each of one block of enduring granite, without seam or joining." And then



RUINS OF KARNAK FROM THE EAST.

The smaller standing obelisk is that of Thothmes I. The tall obelisk is that of Queen Hatshepsut. The fallen one is a fragment of the queen's second obelisk.

she tells how long the job took to do, and that is perhaps the greatest wonder of all. Senmut did his little job in exactly seven months! I wonder how many engineers to-day would undertake to do the same thing with no better tools than the old architect had.

Sometimes it is very hard for us, who live so long after all these old folks are dead and gone, to feel that they were ever real people like ourselves, with feelings and desires just like our own; that they had ever sore hearts or anxious minds, and weren't always mummies or figures on some battered monument. So one is glad that in the great queen's story of her obelisks she has let us see a little bit into her heart, and has shown us that, great and proud as she was, she was just a woman after all, who liked to be praised for what she had done, just like other people. Listen to her message to the ages to come—to you and me, in fact: "O ye people, who shall see my monument in after years, and shall talk of that which I have made, beware lest ye say, 'I know not, I know not why this was done, and a mountain of gold fashioned as it were an everyday occurrence!' . . . Let not him who hears what I have said say, 'It's a lie;' but let him rather say, 'How

like herself it is, for she was always truthful in the sight of her father ! ” Poor lady, one is glad to think that nobody dreams of questioning her truthfulness now, and that she has got all the credit that her heart could wish for many a century.

But she has given us another glimpse of what was in her heart, so that we can see that it was not by any means all pride that made her set up these huge monuments, but even more something that it would be hard to call anything less than genuine piety and love of God. She was a pagan, of course, and Amen, whom she worshipped, was perhaps not very much of a god to our minds ; but at least she loved and served the highest being she had been taught to know, even if she had been taught wrong. Listen to her again for a moment, as she tells us what led her to set up the two obelisks. “ I was sitting in my palace. I was thinking of my Creator, when my heart led me to make for him two obelisks whose points should mingle with heaven. I have done this from a loving heart for my father Amen.” And then she breaks into what is really a little verse of a psalm of her own composition :

“ I did it under his command ; it was he who led me.

I conceived no works without his doing ; it was he who directed me.

I slept not because of his temple ; I erred not from that which was commanded.

My heart was wise before my father ; I entered into the affairs of his heart.

I turned not my back on the City of the Almighty ; but I turned to it my face.”

If you met that verse in your Bible, would you know that there was any difference between it and some of the Psalms, or be able to tell that it was written by one whom we used to call a heathen queen ?

Only I don't want you to run away either with the idea that Queen Hatshepsut, great as she was, was a perfect woman. Quite certainly she was not, but a very masterful lady who had a very hot temper, and showed it sometimes in a way that was not in the very least nice. She might love her father Amen, who was in heaven and couldn't quarrel with her, but she found it much harder sometimes to love her father Thothmes, who was so much nearer, and therefore so much more difficult to get on with. We know that from the very place where she put these two great obelisks. The natural place to set them up was in front of one of the gates of the temple, as her father had set up his. But somehow or other she and her father had quarrelled, though they once loved and honoured one another. And so, instead of putting her obelisks before the gate which he had built, she

pulled part of the roof off his beautiful cedar-columned hall, and set up her two splendid shafts right in the middle of it. It was not a pretty action for a daughter to do to her own father ; and, as we shall see, her half-brother, who came after her, just paid her back in her own coin. The Thothmes family were very clever and daring people—perhaps the cleverest rulers whom Egypt ever had ; but nobody can say that they were a loving family. And perhaps Queen Hatshepsut, great queen as she was, would have been none the worse if she had spent a little of the love which she gave to her father Amen on the earthly father whose works she spoiled out of what looks like sheer petty spite.

What happened to her after her jubilee we know very little of. She had an expedition working at the turquoise mines of Sinai four years later, so that she must have reigned for twenty years. But before she had completed her twenty-first year something must have happened, and the great queen either died or was deposed. If she was deposed, then probably her death was not long in coming ; for in the East the path of a fallen monarch from the throne to the grave has never been a long one. In her twenty-first year her half-brother, Thothmes III., is sitting on the throne in her place, and treating her as she had treated her old father. Her great obelisks he sheathed in masonry right up to the roof of her father's hall, so that for 82 feet of their height nobody could read the queen's name on them. Wherever her name occurred, or her figure, in any temple inscription, it was ruthlessly hacked out, so that her chance of blessing from the gods might be destroyed. All her friends and supporters shared the same fate, and were mercilessly harried. What happened to them in life we don't know, but their statues were smashed and cast out from the temples, and in their very tombs their names were chiselled out of the writings, so that their hopes of immortal life might be lost. So far as spite could do it, the memory of the great queen was blotted out from Egypt. Thothmes III. was to be a very great Pharaoh indeed, one of the very greatest ; but we should think all the more of him if he had not shown himself so small-minded towards his half-sister.

Fortunately his malice has failed of its purpose. Even where he hacked out her name most carefully (and he sent climbers up to the very peak of the obelisks to cut it out there), the care of modern students has been able to read it. The very shabbiest of all the things he did—the sheathing of the great obelisks in masonry, so that his sister's name should not be read—has perhaps helped, in the case of

the one which is still standing, to keep her memory green. For the masonry which he built round the shaft has long since fallen down, and during the centuries through which it lasted it protected the beautiful clean-cut hieroglyphics, so that they are clearer and sharper to-day than they would ever have been otherwise. Perhaps the great king is not sorry now that it has been so.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN EGYPTIAN NAPOLEON AND THE CONQUEST OF SYRIA

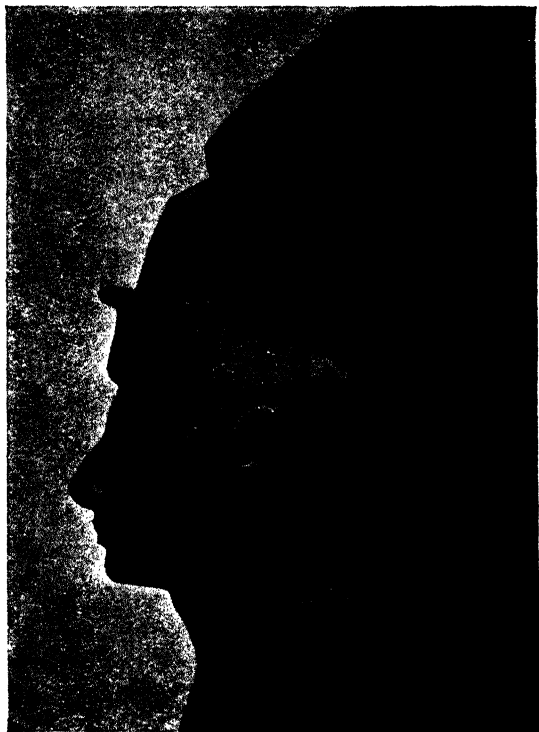
THE twenty years' peace of Queen Hatshepsut's reign had, no doubt, been a great blessing to Egypt itself, giving the country time to recover from the drain of the long war of independence and the campaigns which followed it, but it had been a doubtful advantage to the Egyptian Empire. The chiefs in Southern Palestine, indeed, had still too lively a memory of what an Egyptian invasion meant to venture on rebellion, for they had seen an Egyptian army quartered upon them for three years at a time during the siege of the Hyksos city of Sharuhén. But the North Palestine and Syrian chiefs felt differently. They had never had so sore an experience as their southern friends. Even the great invasion by Thothmes I. had scarcely been more than a passing raid to the Euphrates and back again, and it was more than twenty years since that had happened. A whole new generation had grown up which had never seen an Egyptian soldier, and knew nothing about burning houses and slaughtered men and captive women, but felt very strongly that it was a great nuisance to have to pay tribute every year to a Pharaoh far away in Egypt, whom they had never seen. Besides, had they not heard that even that Pharaoh was only a woman? The Egyptians always revered women, and gave them an honoured place; but the Syrians had all the true Orientals' contempt for women, and, of course, for people who were ruled by a woman. Then came the death of the queen, and the crowning of the new Pharaoh, and to an Eastern a change of ruler like that is almost regarded as an invitation to have a row. When are you ever going to have a chance to rebel if not when kings are being changed?

So King Thothmes had scarcely got firmly seated on his throne when he realized that he was going to have his hands full. The whole of North Palestine and Syria went up in a great blaze of rebellion. The chiefs thought that they had got the chance of their lives, and while they were waiting for the Egyptians to fight with, they got up a general scrimmage among themselves, apparently just to keep their

hands in. Here was the cheerful kind of message that was coming in every day to the young king: "The wretched Asiatics have fallen into disagreement, and every man is fighting against his neighbour. From North Palestine to the marshes of the Great River (the Euphrates) they have begun to revolt against His Majesty." It was enough to break the heart of a new and untried king to have such a job thrust upon him at the very start.

Thothmes did not think so in the very least. In fact, I think he received the news with a beaming smile, as if it were the very thing he wanted; and so it was. His masterful half-sister had kept him in the background all these years, as if he had been a child; now he would be able to show the world the stuff that he was made of. The Syrian chiefs little knew what they had let themselves in for. Before long they were going to find out that what they had thought the chance of their lives was really the mistake of their lives, and that the young Pharaoh whom they had despised was a warrior before the shaking of whose spear the whole earth trembled. Inside six months after he had really taken them in hand these same light-hearted rebels were all coming crawling on their stomachs into the king's presence—"smelling the earth," as the Egyptians put it—and asking him for goodness' sake to let them off this time and they would never do it again.

Of course it took a while for Thothmes to get ready for the little lesson which he meant to give them. The army had never been used for a generation. The old war-dogs of the Hyksos war, Admiral Aahmes and the rest of them, were all either dead or past service, and there would hardly be an officer who had ever commanded a regiment in actual fighting. But the king was in the prime of his life, and perfectly sure that he could lead his army himself, and perhaps it was a good thing to have a young army to fight under a young king. Before he had been a year on the throne he had all his plans and preparations completed, and he marched out of Zaru, the Egyptian frontier fortress at the Isthmus of Suez, on a spring morning, the 19th of April, 1479 B.C. One tries to picture his army, as it filed out on to the great war-road of the nations, which has since seen so many armies come and go to victory and defeat. Not a big army—none of those hosts of hundreds of thousands that the old historians talked about, and that you must divide by about ten if you want to get at the truth. Probably the host that was going to conquer Syria mustered about 20,000 men, or from that to 25,000; quite enough for the work it had to do, and especially for the country it was going to march



THOTHMES III., EGYPT'S GREAT SOLDIER PHARAOH.

through. At the head of all rode the young king himself in his light chariot plated with gold—a dazzling figure in his bright coat of mail, his quaint war-helmet of dark blue, dotted all over with golden rings, on his head, and the golden cobra rearing its hood and fiery crest on his brow. Like so many other famous warriors—Frederick the Great, Napoleon, Nelson—he is quite a little man, with a big aggressive beak of a nose that gives his face the look of a hawk. Behind him comes the chariot brigade, now a regular arm of the Egyptian service. The chariots are quite light, much lighter than the Syrian ones they are going to meet. They have two horses to the chariot, light bent-wood wheels with red leather tyres, and in each chariot is a driver and a bowman, whose bow-case and quiver are fastened to the chariot,

while a lance is also carried in a bucket behind. There are a few hundred chariots in the brigade, perhaps from 500 up to nearly 1,000. Behind them come the infantry, who have to tramp all the weary miles across the desert sands. They are divided into spearmen and bowmen, with a few slingers; and you will see several black battalions of Sûdanese, who are just about the best soldiers in the army. The infantry are divided into four brigades, each called after one of the Egyptian gods—Amen for Thebes, Ra for Heliopolis, Ptah for Memphis, Sutekh for the Delta—and each brigade may muster about 5,000 men. They wear leather skull-caps, and a leather defence for the stomach and thighs in front of their white loin-cloths, and the spearmen have shields with rounded tops and flat bases. Apart from the leather caps and taslets and the bucklers, which are of wood or wicker covered with hide, they have no armour, and travel light. Drums and trumpets call them for their evolutions, and perhaps keep time for their march; but there is no sign of a real band, though the Egyptian would not be an Egyptian if he didn't sing on the march, just as our own men do.

The men who marched behind Thothmes needed to travel light, and to have all the cheer that singing could give them, for he did not spare them any more than he spared himself. Some of your own friends, who fought with Maxwell and Allenby in the East during the Great War, will tell you, if you ask them, the kind of country the Egyptian army had to march over between the Isthmus and Gaza. The Egyptians themselves called it "Land of Perdition," and your friends will probably quite agree with them. There is no more unpleasant bit of marching to do anywhere, and there are 160 miles of it between Zaru, where the army started from, and Gaza, where you may say the worst of the desert is past. Thothmes marched out on the 19th of April, and he was marching into Gaza on the afternoon of the 28th. Eight full days and two bits of days for 160 miles of desert marching—roughly, nearly twenty miles a day, and that with a raw army on its first campaign! King Thothmes evidently knew how to get his men along at all events. The day he reached Gaza was his feast-day, when the anniversary of his coronation was kept, but the young soldier had more important things to think of than coronation anniversaries. He left the good folks of Gaza to celebrate the feast as they pleased, and on the morning of the 29th he was marching out of the town again, bound for the pass of Aaruna, where the great north road crosses the Carmel ridge.

From Gaza he marched more leisurely, both to spare his troops

and to allow his scouts to bring in information as to where the rebel army was concentrated ; and it took him ten days to do the eighty or ninety miles to the south side of the Carmel ridge. By the time he got there, his Intelligence Department had told him that the enemy was gathered in force round about the fortress of Megiddo, just on the northern side of the ridge, and was watching the passes to give him battle as he came through. So the king called his first council of war to ask the advice of his officers as to which pass he should cross by. I fancy it was his last also, for he did not in the least like the advice when he got it.

There were, and still are, three passes leading across the mountain ridge to Megiddo. One went straight from Aaruna, on the south side of the hill, to Megiddo ; another took a bend round to the north, and brought the traveller out on the north side of the town ; a third bent round southwards, and came in on the south side. The straight road was by far the shortest, but it was narrow and steep, so that "An hundred men might hold the post, With hardihood against a host." The Egyptian officers did not in the very least like the idea of marching through such a defile in the face of a waiting enemy. " They said unto His Majesty : ' Why should we go upon this road which is going to be narrow, while the enemy is there waiting, holding the pass with a multitude ? Horse will have to go behind horse and man behind man likewise (single file), and our vanguard will be engaged while our rear-guard is still standing in Aaruna. Behold, there are two other passes ; let His Majesty choose which he likes, but do not make us go by this difficult road.' "

It sounded common sense, but Thothmes was a born soldier, who understood what his cautious officers could not see—that the worst thing you can do in war is the thing that your enemy expects you to do, and is counting upon your doing. If it was plain to his officers that the other two roads were easier, depend upon it, it was plain to the rebel commanders as well, and the easy roads would be guarded. The likeliest road to be unwatched was the difficult one, which the enemy would not expect him to take. Besides, there was his own prestige to consider, and the whole campaign might turn upon the impression he made in this first battle. Nobody should ever say of him that he was afraid to go straight at his enemy. So, having listened to all the wise advice of his officers, he did the opposite. " I swear," he said, " as God loves me, My Majesty will go by this Aaruna road. He who will among you, let him go by these other roads, and he that will, let him follow My Majesty. Shall those enemies whom God

detests say among themselves : ' His Majesty has gone by the other road because he is frightened of us ? ' ' Perish the thought ! The officers knew in a moment that this was a king whom it was advisable to obey. " Behold, we follow thy Majesty in every place whithersoever thy Majesty goeth, as the servant is behind his master."

Thothmes was not the man to put other men into a danger which he was not prepared to face himself. The army entered the pass, strung out into slender files, and at its head went the king in his gilded chariot, the first to meet whatever danger might lurk behind the rocks. " His Majesty swore, saying : ' No man shall go forth in the way before My Majesty.' He went forth at the head of his army himself, showing the way ; horse followed behind horse, His Majesty being at the head of his army." He had judged right, and the bold way proved the safe way. The direct road had been left unguarded by the rebel leaders, who looked for his approach by the easier roads ; and not only did he secure an unchallenged passage for his troops, but he caught the enemy scattered and unready, and was able to secure his own position on the northern side of the ridge before they could concentrate. By the time that their scattered forces had united once more, the Egyptian camp was pitched and secure against attack, and Thothmes could rest his men overnight, sure that his foe could not escape him. His daring generalship had made what might have been a risk of complete destruction into a winning advantage. He was no mere headlong fighter, however, and before night he moved his left wing north-westwards, so as to secure the mouth of the northern road, in case he should need to retreat. That done, a general order was issued : " Equip yourselves ! Prepare your weapons ! for ye shall advance to fight with that wretched foe in the morning." The night watch was set and went round the camp, saying : " Steady of heart ! Steady of heart ! Watchful of head ! Watchful of head ! Watch, on your life, at the tent of the king." The last message came in to Thothmes from his scouts : " The land is secure, and the infantry of the south and north also."

Next morning was the 15th of May, and early in the day the long lines of the two armies were drawn up opposite each other, the Asiatics taking post so as to cover the city of Megiddo. The battlefield must have offered a gay sight. On the one side Thothmes flashed with all the splendour of gold and jewels at the head of his chariot brigade, which was brilliant with all the adornment that Egyptian craftsmen could give. On the other the splendour was almost more dazzling, for there were half a dozen petty kings in the field, and each one rivalled

his neighbour in the magnificence of his equipment. Chariots of gold and silver, or of costly woods inlaid and painted, helmets and coats of mail of bronze inlaid with gold and silver, glittered all along the line in the spring sunshine. So far as outward appearance went there was little to choose between the armies, and probably there was little to choose between them in numbers, for the number of captured chariots which was reckoned up at the end of the day was 924, so that the mounted part of the enemy's force was at least as powerful as that of the Egyptian army.

Unfortunately for the Syrians, however, more is needed than numbers and glitter for the winning of a battle, and all the show went for nothing, because heart and determination were lacking. The battle of Megiddo is one of the great decisive battles of ancient history, which made Egypt the paramount power in the Ancient East for generations ; but so far as fighting went, it scarcely deserves to be called a battle at all. Thothmes dashed forward at the head of his chariots in a furious charge, and the opposing line simply melted before him. The fate of the day was decided in a moment, and the whole plain was covered with fugitives, driving and running, as fast as their horses' legs or their own would carry them, for the sheltering walls of Megiddo. There was next to no killing, and very little capturing, for the Syrians did not wait to be either killed or taken, and the total record was only 83 killed and 340 taken prisoner. The garrison of Megiddo promptly shut the gates when they saw the mob of craven fugitives drawing near, with the Egyptian chariots thundering at their backs, and the poor terror-stricken wretches had to be hauled up the walls by ropes of clothing and sheets let down to them. " Then were captured their horses, their chariots of gold and silver were made spoil ; their champions lay stretched out like fishes on the ground." The men of Thothmes' army rushed cheerfully and unaniously upon the spoil, and for the moment were thoroughly out of hand. It was too much to expect that 20,000 raw soldiers, and Orientals at that, would remember that there were bigger things than plunder, when there lay before them wealth " beyond the dreams of avarice."

All the same the rush for the spoil was a big mistake, as our old historian tells us. " Now if only the army of His Majesty had not given their heart to plundering the things of the enemy, they would have captured Megiddo at this moment when the miserable foe of Kadesh and the miserable foe of this city were being hauled up in haste to bring them into this city ; for the fear of His Majesty had

entered into their hearts, their arms were powerless, his serpent diadem was victorious among them." But the moment passed, and with it the chance ; and Thothmes could only stand frowning and fretting while his men heaped up spoil which was worthless, in his stern soldier's eye, compared with what they had sacrificed for it. They came back at last to him, laden with gold and silver and bronze, threw down before him the eighty-three bloody hands of the unlucky men who had been either too brave or too slow to escape, and drove into the camp between 20,000 and 30,000 cattle, and over 2,000 mares. Probably they expected compliments and praise from their young king, victorious in his first battle ; they were now to learn the kind of master whom they served. He broke out on them in furious reproach : " Had ye captured this city after the rout I would indeed have given a rich offering to God this day ; because all the rebel chiefs are within it, and this capture of Megiddo is as good as the capture of a thousand cities. Now go, and capture it with all your might." You imagine the crestfallen men creeping out of the Presence with red faces and hanging heads. Never again had Thothmes to tell his men that they had neglected to make the most of a victory. Once, indeed, the chronicler had to tell us that the whole army got as drunk as lords after capturing a country rich in wines ; but that is another story, and that monumental spree was after their work was done. The young Pharaoh's men knew henceforth that they need never look for praise from him unless the last drop of advantage had been squeezed out of their victories ; and they fought and worked accordingly.

The best having been missed, it remained to make the second best serve. Megiddo was beleaguered, and lines, fortified with all the timber of the district, were drawn round it. As the slow siege dragged on, the harvest of the Plain of Esdraelon ripened, and the army cheerfully reaped it, and lived in plenty on hundreds of thousands of bushels of grain, while the starving folks of Megiddo looked on and saw their crops being consumed by their enemies. Meanwhile, as nothing succeeds like success, submissions came tumbling in from all the cities and tribes around, who found, to their surprise, that if you struck the new Egyptian Pharaoh he actually struck back, and had a very heavy and hard hand. At last the Megiddoites were too hungry to hold out longer, and a doleful procession came out to the camp of the king, saying : " Give us a chance, and we will pay our taxes." " Then," says Thothmes, " My Majesty commanded to give them the breath of life." If he had been an Assyrian king, he would have flayed some alive, put out the eyes or cut out the tongues of others, burned the

city with fire, and quenched the fire in blood ; but Thothmes was a civilized Egyptian, not a wild beast. Having settled up the whole country of North Palestine, and taken hostages for the good behaviour of all the chiefs in the shape of their eldest sons, whom he carried off to be educated in Egypt, he marched southwards with the spoil of half Syria, including 426 pounds weight of gold, in his baggage train. He was back in Thebes and holding magnificent feasts to celebrate his victory in 148 days from the time he started on his campaign.

I have told you the story of his first campaign so fully because he himself has left a fuller record of it than of any other, and because it shows you the swift and daring spirit of the man. There is no need to trail you through all the seventeen which he led altogether, up to the last one, when, a man of seventy, he captured at last that city of Kadesh, whose king had been his inveterate enemy from the day when he had to be hauled up into Megiddo like a bale of cloth after the rout in the field. The Syrians proved themselves far more stubborn enemies than one might have expected after the poor show they made in their first battle ; but if they were stubborn, they met in Thothmes one who was more than stubborn—who was adamant. They might rebel as often as their folly suggested, in the hope that they might wear out their conqueror at last ; but they only wore themselves out on the anvil of the limitless endurance and energy of the great Pharaoh. No man ever ran up an account with Thothmes but it had to be paid with interest sooner or later, and generally sooner rather than later. A whisper of rebellion in the north, and before the rebels had finished making their plans the tireless Egyptian infantry were tramping down the passes of Palestine or the Lebanon valleys, and their houses were going up in flame over their heads. Sometimes he would get in upon them in what they must have felt a still more unfair fashion, and while they were ranking up their troops to face an army marching from the south, the " old grumblers " of Thothmes would come storming in on their flanks or their rear, having been landed by the fleet at some port far up on the Phœnician coast. For Thothmes was the first of all great soldiers to recognize the meaning of sea-power in warfare, and to see the advantage that it gave to its possessor in the way of enabling him to strike swift and unexpected blows. By the time he had done with his campaigning, and " hung the trumpet in the hall, and studied war no more," there was not a chief in Syria or Naharina who didn't salaam at the very mention of the name of the dreaded Pharaoh. As for rebelling against him ! " There was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped."

It was in his eighth campaign that at last he crossed the great river Euphrates and gave a sound beating to the horse-riding barons of Mitanni on the other side, when they ventured to oppose him. With a proud heart he set up a tablet of victory on the east side of the great river, where no Egyptian army had ever set foot before, and returning from this, his farthest point of advance, he found the old tablet which his father, Thothmes I., had set up on the western side of the river, and set up one of his own beside it. Then he stayed for a while in this wonderful land of Naharina which he had conquered, and which was to be for generations a land of romance to the Egyptians, just as the New World was to Queen Elizabeth's gentlemen adventurers. From all sides embassies came pouring in to the camp of the great soldier, laden with presents of the best that their respective lands could yield. One day it would be a deputation of richly dressed Babylonians, bringing priceless loads of the lovely lapis lazuli that the Egyptian craftsmen knew so well how to work into necklets, diadems, and amulets ; another day the whole camp would be staring at the rough sheepskin coats and big boots with turned-up toes worn by a troop of Hittite soldiers from the heart of the mountains of Asia Minor, who brought rings of the silver which was still more precious than gold, and a big lump of white jade that had drifted through from China to them. Or again it might be some deputies from the rising Assyrian nation, who brought some more lapis lazuli and some costly woods for inlaying. The Babylonian envoys would be furiously angry when they saw their poor but pushful cousins from Assyria, and would tell the king that he ought not to receive the Assyrian envoys, who were only vassals of Babylon, and had no right to be there at all ; and the Assyrians would sneer at the Babylonians, and tell Thothmes that their friendship was far more worth having than that of a doddering old state like Babylon, which was long past its best.

In the intervals there was elephant hunting, as we saw at the very start of our story, and one day it nearly came about that Thothmes' campaigns suddenly came to an end. Elephant hunting in those days was quite a different business from what it is now in our days of high-velocity rifles, and you had to be fast on your feet as well as daring, if you wanted to live long at the job. One day Thothmes was not quite fast enough, and a charging elephant nearly got him. But the Pharaoh had bred a race of soldiers who would follow him anywhere, and one of his staff, Captain Amenemhab, faced the angry monster, cut off his trunk with a slash of his bronze sword, and then ran for his life between two rocks in the river, where the wounded beast could not get at him.

Amenemhab tells us the story himself in brief business-like words. "His Majesty hunted 120 elephants for the sake of their tusks. . . . I engaged the largest which was among them, which fought against His Majesty; I cut off his hand (trunk) while he was alive before His Majesty, while I stood in the water between two rocks. Then My Lord rewarded me with gold." The "Gold of Valour," which is what he means, was the Egyptian Victoria Cross, and it was surely well earned on this occasion.

One of the most interesting things about the great Pharaoh was the knack that he had, like Napoleon and other great captains, of gathering round him men who were as daring and as cunning as himself. The pluck of one of them you have just seen. Another was called Tahuti, and was perhaps the most famous of them all; and you all owe him a deep debt of gratitude, though you may never have heard his name until now; for he captured the town of Joppa by a clever trick, introducing some of his men into the city in oil jars, as if they were merchandise. Once in, they seized the gate of the city, and Tahuti stormed in without any trouble. Stories like that linger in the East for many centuries, and when Scheherazade was hard up for a story on one of the Thousand and One Nights, she remembered the old story of Tahuti and his oil jars, and worked it up into the tale of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. If you ever go to the Louvre at Paris, you will see the magnificent golden dish which King Thothmes gave to this old captain of his for some of his good work, and the old soldier's dagger is at Darmstadt. The inscription on the golden dish says: "Given as a distinction from King Thothmes III. to the prince and priest who satisfied the king in every country . . . commander of the army, favourite of the king, king's scribe, Tahuti."

Great though he was as a soldier, Thothmes was just as great as a ruler. All over Egypt one can still see the work of his hand, and we in this country, and our friends across the Atlantic, ought to know about him better than any one else. For it was he who set up the two great obelisks which stand on the Thames Embankment and in New York Central Park, and go, quite wrongly, by the name of Cleopatra's Needles. In the great temple of Karnak at Thebes you can still see that he was far more than a mere fighter, and loved knowledge as well as he loved fame. For on his Syrian campaigns he used to take men of science with him, just as Napoleon did on his Egyptian expedition, and they brought back specimens of all the curious plants and birds that they found in the strange new lands that were being opened up. Thothmes had pictures of them carved on the walls of the buildings

that he added to the great temple, and there to this day you can see them—"the Botanic Garden of Thothmes III.," they are called. Somehow one does not expect such a thing from a warrior king of 3,000 years ago ; but Thothmes was far more than a warrior king.

Even before he died people were making him into a kind of legendary hero of romance, and poems were being written about him. When he died, twelve years after he had finished all his battles, and fifty-four years after he came to the throne, he became more of a legendary hero than ever. Wonder tales of all sorts grew up about him and his great captains, just as they have grown up in our own land about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The very syllables of his name came to be held as having magical power, and were written—*Men-Kheper-Ra*—on the little beetle figures that the Egyptians were so fond of as amulets, "scarabs" as we call them. It is nearly 3,400 years since he died, but Sir Flinders Petrie tells us that, out of every three named scarabs that you come across, two will generally bear the name of the great Pharaoh who first made Egypt a world-empire.

CHAPTER XXIV

WONDER TALES FROM AN ENCHANTED LAND

WITH the reign of King Thothmes, Egypt reached the height of her glory. Her empire reached from the Fourth Cataract of the Nile, far away south in the Sûdan, to the Amanus Mountains, which run down to the Mediterranean at the Bay of Issus, where Asia Minor joins on to Asia, and to the "Great Bend of Naharin," as the Egyptians called the big elbow of the Euphrates above Syria. There was no other power to dispute her headship of the ancient world. Babylonia was sluggish under her lazy Kassite kings, far too busy making money to worry much over empire, but every now and again having a squabble with her pushing young neighbour Assyria, and pretty often getting the worst of it; for already Assyria was proving herself rather a spiky handful for any one who tried to handle her, and she particularly resented Babylon's pretensions to be her overlord. Up in the great mountains of Anatolia the Hittites, whom we saw with their big boots and sheepskin coats in the camp of Thothmes, were busy building up a strong confederation of their tribes, which was soon to prove a fair match for either Egypt or Babylonia; but in the meantime the Hittite leaders were too busy murdering one another and being murdered to be able to interfere with Egypt's conquering career. Their time was coming, but it was not yet. Assyria, which was to prove in the end the most dangerous of all, was just beginning to find its feet—a young Titan, rather clumsy and awkward, very keen to push himself to the front, but rather looked down upon by the big old empires as a new-comer, who hadn't quite learned manners yet. Mitanni, with its dominant aristocracy of Aryan knights ruling over a subject people as the Normans ruled in Sicily, was a neighbour who had to be reckoned with; but, though nobody knew it as yet, Mitanni's day was nearly done. So Egypt stood proudly and confidently in the conquered lands of Syria and Naharina, easily first among the nations, and all the other powers tumbled over one another in their eagerness to get into her favour.

To the Egyptians it was as if a wonderful new world had been

opened before their eyes. The country itself was strange and mysterious, with its great double range of the Lebanons, to a race used to their own long, straggling, flat valley, with its margin of hills. Even its big frontier river, the Euphrates, was a mystery, with its current running the opposite way to that in which any decent river ought to run ; and the great plains east and west of the Euphrates were weird, eerie places, with their herds of elephants and their prowling lions—places where anything might happen, where you might meet with a strange god, or a stranger devil, or an imprisoned princess, any day in the week, as part of the day's job. Of course all the bold young men were eager to see the new land, and to have their adventures in it. Thothmes' soldiers brought home the most amazing yarns of the fine or the terrible things to be seen and done in Naharina, and every village in Egypt would have one or two of these war-hardened veterans, to whom the young men listened, as they bragged over their beer in the cool of the evening, as if they were hearing the very oracles of God. And so, bit by bit, a group of wonder stories grew up around this strange new land and the Egyptians who had found their way into it, and these stories were told from mouth to mouth in Egypt for generations, and were written down at last on papyrus rolls. Some of them, of course, have perished, for papyrus is easily destroyed, and some of them have only come down to us in miserable scraps from which we can only get the faintest idea of what the whole story must have been to begin with. One of these is a wonderful tale about a king of Egypt and a foreign goddess from Naharina, who changes herself into a beautiful girl that she may do some harm to the king. It sounds as if it must have been a most thrilling tale when it was complete, but the poor scraps that are left only give us a sentence here and a bit of another there, and we hear of the goddess coming laden with gifts in baskets of silver and gold, and the king coming to the house of his master of the harem, and the baleful goddess changing herself "into a fair damsel." Then the king takes his chariot, and goes north to Naharina ; and the next thing we hear is a scrap about the goddess slaying the people. With that the scraps break off altogether at a sentence which says : " And many days after this . . . " ; and you are left to wonder what happened many days after this, for you will never know.

But one or two of the old tales have come down through all these centuries of neglect and forgetfulness, and can still be read from the yellow old rolls on which they were written. Two of them are on a papyrus which is in the British Museum. The aggravating thing

about this old roll is that it was complete when it was found ; but while it was stored away in a house at Alexandria by Mr. Harris, who had bought it, an explosion took place near at hand, and part of the roll was destroyed. Before this disaster it is known that a copy of it was made, but somehow or other this copy has disappeared altogether, and nobody knows what has become of it. So we are left with our broken roll, a good deal more complete than most of such things, but spoiled just at the two worst places possible, just at the conclusion of one story and the beginning of the other, so that we do not know what happened to the prince in the first, or what had been happening to the soldier in the second, before our fragment begins.

The first story is sometimes called " The Enchanted Prince," and sometimes " The Doomed Prince," and perhaps the second name is the better, as you will see from the tale itself. There was once a king who had no son. So he prayed to his gods for a son, and they decreed that one should be born to him ; and in due time a son was born. Now the Hathors (Hathor was a great Egyptian goddess who filled the rôle of our fairy godmothers) came to foretell his destiny, and they said : " He will die either by the crocodile, or by the snake, or by the dog ! " His nurses heard that, and told it to His Majesty, and His Majesty became very sad of heart. So he built for the boy a fine house of stone on the edge of the desert, and filled it with all kinds of fine things from the palace, and with trusty servants ; and the child was never allowed to go out from it.

Now one day, when the boy was growing up, he went up on the roof of his house, and lo, he saw a man walking along with a greyhound following after him. So he said to his servant who was with him : " What is that thing that goeth behind the man who walketh along the road ? " The servant answered : " It is a greyhound." And the lad said unto him : " See that one like unto this is brought unto me also." Then went the servant and told the matter unto His Majesty. And His Majesty said : " Let a little puppy that jumpeth about be taken to him, that his heart be not sore." So a puppy greyhound was taken unto him. (And so you see the doom of the young prince beginning to cast its shadow over him.)

Many days went by after this, and the boy was full-grown. So he sent to his father, saying : " What is the use of my sitting here ? Lo, I am doomed to one of the three fates, and you cannot change it. Therefore grant me to do whatever my heart desires ; for God will surely do what is in His heart." Then there was given to him a chariot fully equipped with weapons, and a servant as henchman.

And he was convoyed over unto the eastern frontier (the Isthmus of Suez), and it was said unto him : " Go where thou wilt." And, behold, his greyhound was with him.

Then he travelled northwards as his heart led him, through the desert, and he lived on the choicest of all the wild beasts of the desert. So came he at last to Naharina, and the prince thereof.

Now the prince of Naharina had no child, saving only one daughter. And for her he had built a house on a mighty rock, and its window was 70 cubits distant from the ground. And he caused all the sons of all the princes of the land of Syria to be called, and he said unto them : " Whosoever shall climb to the window of my daughter shall have her as his wife."

Now when many days had gone by, and they were still trying to climb the rock, the young prince from Egypt passed by. They took him to their camp, bathed him, fed his span of horses, and gave bread to his henchman. Then said they unto him : " Whence comest thou, gallant young man ? " He answered them : " I am the son of an officer of the chariotry of the land of Egypt. My mother died, and my father took to him another wife. My stepmother hated me, and so I fled from before her, and am come hither." Then they embraced him, and entreated him kindly.

And after many days had passed he said unto the youths : " What is this that ye do ? " And they answered him : " Whosoever shall climb to the window of the daughter of the prince of Naharina, to him will he give her as his wife." Then said the lad : " Would that I might put a charm upon my feet : then would I climb also." So they went to climb, and the lad stood below and watched them, and the glance of the daughter of the prince of Naharina fell upon him as he stood there, and her heart went out towards him. Now after many days the lad came also to climb with the sons of the princes ; and he so climbed that he came to the window of the princess. And she kissed him, and embraced him very many times.

Then went they to gladden the heart of the prince of Naharina with these tidings, and said unto him : " Behold, a man hath reached the window of thy daughter." Then the prince asked, saying : " Whose son among the princes is it ? " And they said unto him : " It is the son of an officer of chariots, who hath come from the land of Egypt, fleeing from his stepmother." Then the prince of Naharina waxed exceeding angry, and said : " Shall I give my daughter to an Egyptian runaway ? Let him take himself off again."

So they came and said unto him : " Get thee back to the place



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whence thou camest." But the princess laid hold upon him, and said : " By God ! if he is taken from me I will not eat, I will not drink, I will die straightway." (The first woman hunger-striker on record.) And the messenger went back and told her father all that she had said.

Then the prince sent men to slay him then and there. And the princess said unto them : " By God ! if he is slain, by sunset I, too, will be dead. I live not an hour longer than he." So they went and told it to her father.

Then the prince summoned the lad and his daughter. He embraced him and kissed him again and again. He gave him his daughter as his wife, and he gave him a house and lands and cattle likewise, and all kinds of good things.

Now when many days had gone by, the youth said unto his wife : " I am doomed to three destinies—either the crocodile, or the snake, or the dog." And she answered him : " Why not have the greyhound that followeth thee slain, then ? " But he said unto her : " By God ! I will not have my greyhound slain, which I brought up since it was a little puppy." So his wife began to guard her husband carefully, and would not suffer him to go out alone. Now the youth and his wife returned to the land of Egypt. And the crocodile of the lake was there, but there was also a mighty man who suffered not the crocodile to come forth. And when the crocodile slept, then the mighty man came forth to stroll about.

Now, when many days had gone by after this, the youth sat him down and made merry in his house. And when the night came the youth slept upon his bed, and all his limbs were loosened in sleep. But his wife filled one bowl with milk, and another bowl with beer. Then a serpent came forth out of its hole to bite the youth ; but his wife sat beside him and slept not. She gave the serpent the beer to drink, and it drank and became drunken, and went to sleep and lay out its full length. And his wife hewed the serpent in pieces with her axe. Then she wakened her husband, and said unto him : " Lo, thy god hath given one of thy dooms into thine hand. He will also give thee the others." So she made an offering unto Ra, and worshipped him, and daily praised his power.

Now it came to pass after many days that the youth went forth to stroll in his domain, and his dog followed him. And his dog chased the game which ran in front of him. And the youth came unto the lake, and went down after his dog. Then came forth the crocodile and carried him off, and took him to its place where it was kept by the mighty man. And the crocodile said unto the youth : " I am thy

doom, following after thee!" And then, just at the very crisis of the whole story, the provoking papyrus breaks off, and we only get another scrap of a sentence: "Now when it was dawn, and another day had come, there came——" But we cannot tell who came—whether the mighty man, or the prince's wife, or anybody else. No doubt he was saved somehow from the talking crocodile, only to perish at last through some accident with his faithful dog. Some happy day perhaps we may come upon another papyrus which will tell us the fate of the Doomed Prince; meanwhile we must leave him in the most uncomfortable position where he has been left by the old Egyptian scribe who wrote the roll in the days of the famous Pharaoh, Ramses II., just about 200 years after Thothmes III.

Our next story from Egypt's new possession belongs to King Thothmes' old captain, Tahuti, of whom I have told you already, and though we have only a scrap of it left, yet it has its own interest, because, as I pointed out, it is the original source of our old favourite, Ali Baba. It is called, "How Tahuti took the Town of Joppa." The beginning of it was lost in the same explosion which destroyed the end of the story of the Doomed Prince, but fortunately it is not difficult to see how it must have gone. You are to imagine that the Prince of Joppa, the famous seaport in Palestine, has revolted against Thothmes; and the Pharaoh being busy, I suppose, with other things, has sent his trusty captain Tahuti to bring the place back to its senses, and has given the old general his own royal leading-staff as a sign of authority. Already, it seems, even while Thothmes was still alive, his fame as a soldier has caused wonderful stories to grow up about his magic power, and especially this leading-staff is famous as a wonder-working instrument, just as Moses' rod became famous among the Hebrews.

What has just been happening when our scrap of papyrus takes up the tale is something like this. Tahuti, who was a wily old fellow, as well as a fine soldier, and who, like most Egyptians, much preferred to get his work done without fighting if that were possible, has hit upon a plan to get the Prince of Joppa into his hands without all the trouble and mess of a battle. He has given out to his enemy that he himself has deserted from the Egyptian service, and has come north to ally himself with the rebels in Joppa. Quite casually he has mentioned that he has stolen the magic leading-staff of King Thothmes, and has got it with him, knowing well that such a statement would stir up the curiosity of the rebel prince as nothing else would. The bait has taken, and the Prince of Joppa has come out to the camp of Tahuti to

arrange terms of alliance with him, evidently on the understanding that when they have come to an agreement the wonder-working staff shall be shown to him. No doubt he was thinking that he would trick Tahuti, as Tahuti had made up his mind to trick him, and would manage to get the staff into his possession one way or the other. The two tricksters meet and have a feast in the tent of Tahuti, who has doubtless managed to arrange that the guard of the rebel prince shall be kept away from their master and duly made drunk, or otherwise disposed of. The meal in the tent is over, and the two chiefs have sat down to drink; and now the papyrus begins to tell its own story in its own way.

Now after an hour, when they were drunken (at least the Prince of Joppa was, but I fancy Tahuti had too steady a head for that), Tahuti said unto the Prince of Joppa: "Well, I will come with my wife and my children into thine own city. Only let thy grooms bring either thy horses and feed them. So the horses were brought and fed (Tahuti having a use for them and their driver, as we shall see).

Then the Prince of Joppa desired to see the leading-staff of King Thothmes, and he said to Tahuti: "My desire is to see the great leading-staff of King Thothmes, which is called 'The Beauteous.' . . . by King Thothmes, thou hast it here with thee to-day! Be so good as to show it unto me." And he did so, and brought the leading-staff of King Thothmes. And he stood up before him and cried: "Look at me, O Prince of Joppa. Lo, this is the staff of King Thothmes, the fierce-eyed lion, the son of Sekhmet" (the Egyptian war-goddess).

His father Amen hath given him his strength in order to slay his nemy." And with that he smote the Prince of Joppa on the temple with the staff, so that he fell down senseless before him. Then he bound him with leather thongs, and put four copper fetters on his feet, two to each foot.

Then Tahuti caused to be brought 200 earthenware jars, which he had had made, and caused 200 soldiers to enter into them, and arms and handcuffs were put in along with them, and they were sealed up leaving, we may hope, some hole for the poor men to breathe through). And they and their carrying-poles were ranked in order. And brave soldiers all were made to carry them, 500 in number, and it was said unto them: "When ye be come into the city, let out your comrades, and lay hold on all the people that are in the city, and put the handcuffs on them."

Then an orderly of Tahuti went out and said unto the charioteer of the Prince of Joppa: "Thy lord bids thee go and say unto thy lady,

his wife, 'Be glad of heart, for that Sutekh' " (the Asiatic's god) " 'hath given unto us Tahuti, together with his wife and his children. Lo, here is their tribute' " (meaning thereby the 200 jars full of soldiers, with handcuffs and fetters). And the charioteer went in front of them to gladden the heart of his mistress, shouting: "We have Tahuti." And she bade open the closed gates of the city before the soldiers. So they entered into the city, and they let out their comrades.

Then they laid hold upon the people of the city, both small and great, and put on them the fetters and the handcuffs. Thus the strong arm of Pharaoh captured the city.

Then that night Tahuti sent to Egypt unto King Thothmes his lord, saying: "Be glad! For Amen, thy good father, hath given unto thee the Prince of Joppa and all his people, and his city likewise. Now send men to take them away as captives, that thou mayest fill the house of thy father Amen, king of gods, with male and female slaves, that are fallen down for ever and ever under thy feet."

So the story ends, you see, without a single drop of blood being spilt, though a rebel city has been brought back into Pharaoh's power. There were other nations in the Ancient East who would have made the streets of Joppa run with blood, and would have made the place a desolation and sown it with salt; while the Prince of Joppa would have had his eyes thrust out, and his tongue cut out, his skin stripped off, and, quite possibly, his writhing body pegged out in the sun for the ants to devour. As it was, he wakened, no doubt, with a very bad headache, and wondered what had happened; but in the end things would not be made too uncomfortable for him, and his eldest son, after getting a good education in Egypt, would likely be sent back to Joppa again to rule his father's town as an Egyptian vassal. That was the Egyptian way, and I think it was a better way than the Assyrian way of flaying people and poking out their eyes. Not that the good folk of Palestine and Syria were ever very grateful, in the main, for the gentler treatment which they got from the Egyptians. They remained as stubborn and as dour as ever, though here and there there was a chief who learned to respect and trust his new masters. One or two of such men showed later on, as we shall see, that even a "vile Asiatic" could be faithful unto death to his pledged word when Egypt's day of misfortune came.

Those earthenware jars into which Tahuti packed his men (some say they were leather jars and not earthenware) may seem rather a big order; but if ever you have seen a picture of the rows upon rows



THE SORT OF JAR THAT TAHUTI HID HIS MEN IN: OIL
JARS FROM PALACE OF KNOSSOS, CRETE.

f huge store-jars which Sir Arthur Evans discovered in the larders of the palace of Minos at Knossos, in Crete, you will understand how easy it would be for a soldier to stow himself away for a little while in one of these magnificent pots. Where Tahuti was, at Joppa, there would be no difficulty in getting such jars, for the Cretans traded with all the Levant, and cargoes of their great jars, filled with the Cretan olive oil, were common enough along all the coast of Palestine and Phœnicia.

So these two old tales tell you a little of the feeling with which the Egyptians of more than 3,000 years ago regarded the new lands which had fallen into their power. There must have been scores of other stories of the same kind that we may never hear about, though there is no knowing what may yet be discovered under the sands of that wonderful land of the Nile. Our own Elizabethan adventurers used to come home with the most wonderful yarns about the Golden City

of Manoa, and El Dorado, the Golden Emperor. Well, you see, the Egyptians had their stories too, not much more truthful, perhaps, than the Elizabethan ones, about the wonders of Naharina ; and though they are not very brilliant as stories, and are only fragments of what we might have had, still they show you that folks were much the same 3,000 years ago as they were in the " spacious days of great Elizabeth," and as they are still.

Only the Golden Emperor of the Ancient East did not live in any of these new lands that the Egyptians were getting to know. He lived in Egypt, where all the kings of that old world used to send messengers to flatter him and fawn upon him, and, to tell the truth, beg most shamelessly from him ; and we shall hear about him in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GOLDEN EMPEROR

WHEN the great warrior-Pharaoh died, he left behind him a young prince, Amenhotep II., who had already been taking over some of the work of the kingship for his father for a year, and who was now perhaps about eighteen years old. The young Amenhotep was as keen a soldier as his father, though he was never destined to win much fame ; but his soldiership was more that of the knight-errant, who delights in a fight because it gives him a chance to show off his strength and skill. If his father had been a little man, like so many great soldiers, he himself was a big strapping fellow, who was immensely proud of his strength. He prided himself on having a bow that no other man in his army or among his vassal tribes could draw ; but if he had brawnier arms than his father, there is no evidence that he had as good brains in his head, while he had a touch of cruelty in his nature that the old conqueror had not. War is apt to breed cruelty in a race, and a young prince who had heard of nothing else but fighting all his days can scarcely be blamed if a vein of fierceness flowed itself at last in him.

As soon as the news of the death of the old lion reached Syria, the whole Lebanon went up in a flame of revolt. They hadn't had a chance of a row for the last twelve years, and all the chiefs were simply spoiling for a fight. They got it, and perhaps were a little sorry afterwards that they had asked for it, for Amenhotep proved himself a true son of his father, so far as swiftness and daring went. He raced up through Palestine like a devouring fire, and somewhere in the Lebanon, among the great hills, he smashed the army of the rebel chiefs to pieces. I don't suppose that the young lad was anything of a general, as his father had been, but he had plenty war-wise captains to guide him, and at least he showed that he was a first-class fighting man, and as brave as could be asked for. There would be nobody to criticize his generalship when the king came back from the pursuit blood-spattered, and leading his long string of prisoners. "His Majesty," says the old record, "was in the city of Shemesh-Edom ; His Majesty

furnished an example of bravery there ; His Majesty himself fought hand to hand. Behold, he was like a fierce-eyed lion, smiting the countries of Lebanon. List of that which His Majesty himself captured on this day : Asiatics, 18 living persons ; 16 horses."

From the Lebanon the king swept on down the Orontes valley into Naharina, and had the joy of his heart in the shape of a fine hand to hand scrimmage just after he had crossed the ford of the Orontes. It isn't often that the musty old records of those days give you anything the least like a picture, but you get one here : the glittering young knight-errant, in all the glory of his royal panoply, lifting his arm and shading his eyes with one hand as he looks across the burning plain to the far horizon, where he has made out moving figures. In a little they take the shape of rebel cavalry riding swiftly, and the king charges upon them like lightning, and challenges their leader and overthrows him. " His Majesty raised his arm, in order to see to the end of the earth ; His Majesty descried some Asiatics coming on horses, coming at a gallop. Behold, His Majesty seized his weapons of battle, His Majesty fought like Set in his hour. They fled when His Majesty so much as looked at one of them. Then His Majesty himself overthrew their chief with his spear. . . . Behold, he carried away this Asiatic, his horses, his chariot, and all his weapons of battle. His Majesty returned with joy of heart to his father Amen ; and His Majesty made to him a feast. List of that which His Majesty captured on this day : His (the chief's) horses, 2 ; chariots, 1 ; a coat of mail ; 2 bows ; a quiver, full of arrows, and a corselet." I daresay that King Amenhotep was prouder of this spoil, which he had taken single-handed in front of his army, than of all the rest of his splendours.

The Egyptian advance was pressed right up to the Euphrates and across it, so that the young king was able to set up his tablet of victory beside his father's. It was on his return to Thebes that he showed that strain of brutal savagery which, as I said, was unusual in Egyptian warfare. Seven of the rebel chiefs had been captured, and as the king drew near to Thebes the miserable wretches were hanged head downwards at the bow of the royal barge. On his arrival the poor half-dead creatures were dragged into the temple of Amen, where the king slew six of them with his own hand as a sacrifice to the god. The seventh was sent up-river to far-off Napata, at the Fourth Cataract, where his body was hung upon the walls to teach the negroes how long was the arm of the Pharaoh, who could thus pluck a man out of the heart of Asia, to slay him in Central Africa. No doubt the lesson went home, but it was a sign that already the lust of conquest and

the pride of might was corrupting the heart of Egypt. No nation ever thrived by such barbarities.

The triumphant success of his first campaign made it also Amenhotep's last, much to his disgust, no doubt. The rebels had wished to find out whether Egypt's arm was shortened by the death of her great champion. Well, they had seen that it was not, and the one experience was enough. Amenhotep never had cause again to draw anger that bow of which he was so proud. When he died, after a reign of more than twenty-five years, it was buried along with him, and it was found in his coffin when, in 1898, M. Loret entered his tomb in the Valley of the Kings, and found the king lying in his carved stone sarcophagus under the blue-painted, gold-starred roof of the burial chamber. The wonderful weapon bore the words, after the name of its owner: "Smiter of the cave-dwellers, overthrower of Kush (Ethiopia), hacking up their cities . . . the Great Wall of Egypt, protector of his soldiers." One of his own inscriptions may be his epitaph: "He is a king very weighty of arm; there is not one who can draw his bow among his army, among the hill country sheikhs, nor among the princes of Syria, because his strength is so much greater than that of any king who ever lived." A big strong man and a fine fighter, but not a great king.

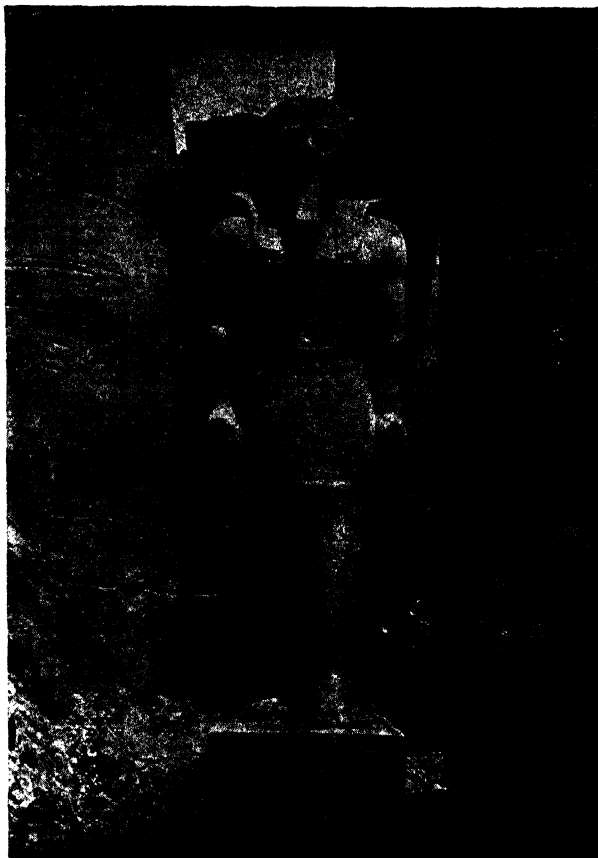
His delicate and short-lived son, Thothmes IV., is remembered because he was the first of the many who have cleared away the sand which is perpetually threatening to swallow up the great image of the Sphinx. It is more than 3,300 years since he did it, and in the interval it has been done again perhaps half a dozen times or more, until Merneptah did it again just the other day. Now, for a while, you can see the Sphinx clear to its base, as the sculptor left it nearly 5,000 years ago, and as Thothmes IV. left it 1,600 years later; but the sand will win in the end.

And now there came to the throne of Egypt a young lad who for thirty-six years was to be the most splendid and glittering example of kingship that the ancient world ever knew. We talk of "Solomon in all his glory," but Solomon was only a petty king of a little third-rate country, which had been but a tiny province of the Egyptian Empire, and his glory, wonderful as it seemed to the Hebrews, would have seemed a cheap tinsel thing beside the magnificence of Amenhotep II. This young king was to be the true Golden Emperor, before whom all the kings of the Ancient East hastened to abase themselves in the hope that they might get a few of the crumbs which fell from his rich man's table.

Probably the new king was barely into his teens when he came to the throne; but youth comes to manhood and womanhood far earlier in the East than with us, and King Amenhotep was already a man when he first put on the Double Crown of Egypt. Moreover—a thing which was to prove still more important in the end—he was a married man, and the woman who sat beside him on the throne was one of the cleverest and most capable women of the ancient world, and was destined to influence the history of her country far more powerfully than her easy-going, pleasure-loving husband. The king had already broken with the ancient traditions of his race in marrying her, for, though she was the daughter of two high officials—Prince Yuaa, priest of Min, and his wife Tuiu, mistress of the robes in the royal palace—she was not of royal blood, nor even of the first aristocracy. The Great Royal Wife of a Pharaoh had always been of royal blood herself, whether native or foreign, and Amenhotep's own mother had been a princess of Mitanni; if the king wished to wed a commoner, she was taken into the harem as a secondary wife. But Amenhotep was far too deeply in love with the lady Tiy to care for tradition. He not only married her, but sent out a proclamation telling his people of what he had done, in which he specially named the father and mother of his bride, as if to challenge any one to question her position. Later on he followed the usual custom of his fathers and took another wife—a princess from Mitanni, as his own mother had been; but when the Princess Gilukhipa came down from Mitanni, with 317 maids of honour to attend her, it was she who was put into the background, and Queen Tiy still reigned supreme over the heart of her lord and the Egyptian court.

Life must have looked very bright for the young couple when they began their reign. There was, of course, the usual little trouble over the change of ruler, and one or two rash chiefs tried how far it was safe to go in rebellion to the new king, so that Amenhotep had to lead an expedition into Nubia, and another up to Syria. But all that was a mere trifle, and once the Egyptian banners had been seen in the field they never needed to be displayed again for more than thirty years, during which peace reigned over the whole empire. Indeed, even the expedition to Sidon was more of a military procession, to impress the Syrian chiefs, than a real war, and His Majesty managed to get a good deal of fun out of it, in the way of some most exciting hunting.

For King Amenhotep was a regular Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord," as the Bible puts it, and took every chance of showing his prowess as an archer against the big game of the Eastern



EGYPT'S GOLDEN EMPEROR.

This great granite statue at Luxor really represents Amenhotep III.
Ramses II. stole it, and carved his name on the base.

world. In his own country there was not so much chance of a hunt with real danger in it; though already in his second year, when he can only have been about fifteen, his huntsmen had rounded up for him in the Delta a herd of 170 wild cattle, out of which His Majesty slew 75 in two days. But Syria and Naharina were the real hunter's paradise of those days. Up there, as Thothmes III. found, you could

get elephant hunting in abundance, with as much danger as you liked ; and almost as exciting as the elephant hunt was lion-slaying. It was this that Amenhotep specialized in, and his visit to Sidon and the rest of his northern empire gave him a fine chance for indulging his hobby. At the very beginning of our story I told you of his record, of which he was so proud that he published a proclamation about it, just as he did about his marriage. You can read it still on his hunting scarabs : " Statement of lions which His Majesty brought down with his own arrows from year 1 to year 10 : fierce lions, 102." Perhaps it was as innocent a way of putting in his time as an old-world king could find ; for if it was no longer one of a king's first duties to fell the forest, it was still a duty to slay the beast.

So, after his easy victories over rebel Syrian and Nubian, and his tougher struggles with the rebel king of beasts, Pharaoh came home to enjoy himself as a king should, and did it to such purpose that after thirty years of it he died before he was fifty, worn out with enjoying himself. But no doubt he had a magnificent time while it lasted. His first resolve was to make his capital, Thebes, worthy of so great an emperor as himself. The palace had to be made beautiful to house the queen whom he so dearly loved, and all the other ladies who were attached to the royal harem. The Pharaohs of Egypt, proud though they were, showed a good deal of common sense about the matter of their palaces. The other kings of the East, Babylonian, Assyrian, and the rest, gave far more attention to their palaces than to anything else, and housed themselves most gorgeously, just as King Solomon, you remember, did later, taking nearly twice as long to build his own palace as he did to build the Temple. But I think that the Egyptian Pharaohs rather despised such personal ostentation. It was all very well for mere nobodies like the kings of Assyria, whose kingdom was a thing of yesterday, or the kings of Babylon, mere Kassite raiders who came from nobody knew where, to make a great fuss and show over their houses. They needed it, just as a new-rich speculator thinks he needs to make a great show when he settles down among the landed gentry. But the Pharaohs needed no such advertisement. They were gods themselves, and traced their descent for hundreds of years back to the sun-god himself, and the most gorgeous palace could not make them any greater than they were already. Besides, if one Pharaoh built a splendid palace, how was he to know that his son would like it when he came to the throne ? He might prefer something quite different, and then all that splendour would be wasted. So the Pharaohs, instead of building huge and costly palaces like other kings



FROM AN EGYPTIAN LADY'S TOILET TABLE: A CARVED
OINTMENT SPOON.

Girl swimming, and catching duck by the tail.

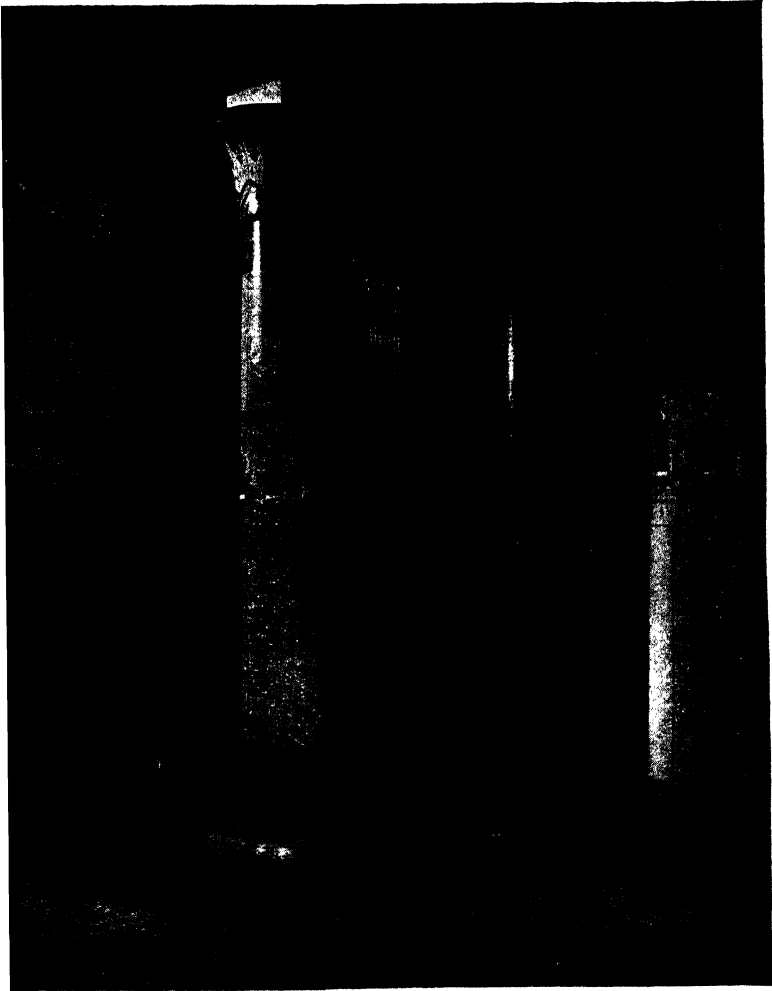
of the old world, used to content themselves with quite simple buildings of no very great size. Roomy they had to be certainly, for they had to house hundreds of folk. If one wife of the king had 317 maids of honour to wait upon her, as Queen Gilukhipa had, you can understand that, with perhaps a dozen other queens, of greater or less importance, to find accommodation for along with their ladies, even a small royal palace must have been like a pretty big hotel. But, instead of being a huge pile heaped up storey upon storey, the palace of Amenhotep would be a far-spreading building of simple mud-brick, mostly of only a single storey in height, and never of more than two. It would be built like a series of pavilions, with bright rooms, gay with painted walls, and abundance of flowers, and with lovely furniture of beautiful design and workmanship in each room—never too much of it, however, for the Egyptians had too good taste for that. Outside, the palace would be covered with white stucco, so that it shone like marble in the blazing Egyptian sun, and its cornices would be picked out in bright and harmonious colours. Round the palace there would lie beautiful gardens, full of flowers, so that the king's house seemed to be embosomed in blossoms; for the Egyptians were passionately fond of flowers, and could not live without them. And somewhere in the park would be a big artificial lake, on which the royal barges lay moored against the time when Pharaoh and his queen would come out with their court for a sail.

Such a palace Amenhotep reared for himself and Queen Tiy, not in the capital itself, on the east bank of the Nile, but away over on the western bank, at the foot of the Libyan hills, and away from

all the noise of the great city. The ruins of it are still there, and you can still see fragments of the paintings which decorated the ceilings of its rooms, with white doves soaring against a blue sky. The lake, which was dug beside the palace for the king and queen to take their pleasure on, was a bit of a wonder—not so much because of its size as because of the speed with which it was made. It was a mile long, and nearly a quarter of a mile broad, and it was begun and finished in fifteen days ! You see, the Egyptian workman could put his back into a thing when there was need, and his engineers knew how to make the best use of him. You can fancy the beautiful house, with its gleaming white walls, its glowing colours, and its masses of gay blossoms, rising up almost like Aladdin's palace, and taking form and splendour under your very eyes as you look.

When all was ready, Amenhotep and Tiy celebrated their housewarming with a gorgeous festival, in which the main feature was a voyage in their gilded barge on the waters of the new lake. No doubt it was a magnificent sight, with the king and queen and their little daughters, for as yet they had no son, leading the line of barges in the state galley, the oars, overlaid with gold, rising and falling in the sunlight to the sound of soft music. The royal barge was called *Tehen Aten*—"The Sun-Disc Gleams"—and that name you should remember, for it came to mean a great deal more in the future than the crowd who watched the splendid show realized at the moment. In fact, that brilliant water-picnic, with its line of gilded barges, was the first little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which gave the sign of the great storm that was gathering and that was in a few years to darken all the glory of the Egyptian Empire. Before long that name "*Aten*" was to be the war-cry of a new religion, sounding from end to end of the land, passionately loved by one part of the nation, and still more passionately hated by the other part ; and men's minds were to be so taken up with the strife between the old faith and the new that they let the Asiatic provinces of the empire, which their great soldier-Pharaoh had won for them, slip from between their fingers almost without a struggle to keep them. The young prince who was to be the prophet and psalmist of the new faith was not born for fifteen years after his parents held their water festival at the new palace ; but that name which his father and mother gave to their barge is the first sign we have that the ideas for which he threw away an empire had begun to make headway at the Egyptian court.

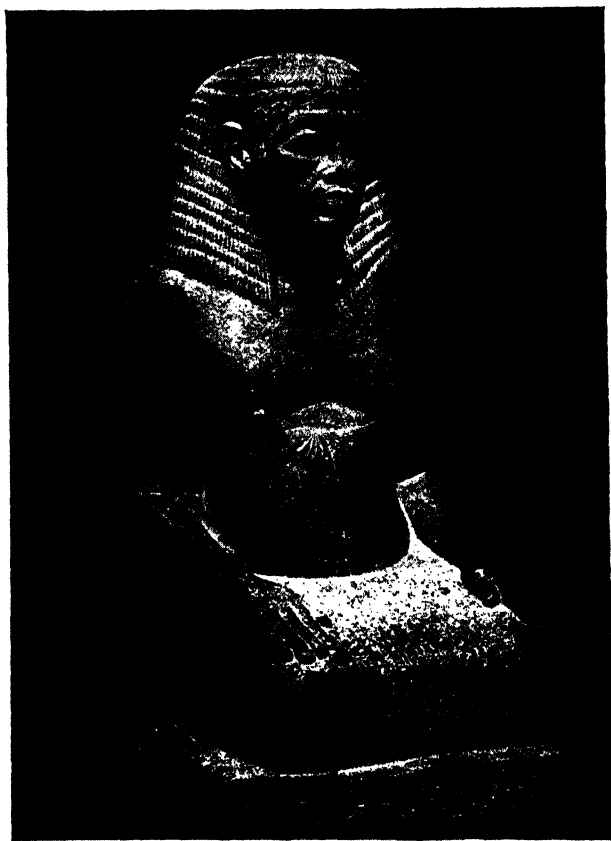
Meanwhile, however, everything was bright and prosperous. All over the empire reigned a profound peace, such as the world had not



THE THRONE-ROOM OF AN EGYPTIAN PALACE.
(*Museum of University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, U.S.A.*)

known for many a long day. Year after year passed in halcyon days, and still "the birds of calm sat brooding on the charmed wave." The posts from Nubia on the south, and from Syria and Babylonia and Mitanni on the north brought in no word of war, but long letters from chiefs and kings protesting their admiration and love for the Golden Emperor who sat enthroned at Thebes, and craving to be allowed to share in a very little of the riches with which the gods had endowed him. Trade was rapidly making the nation rich; for now that Amenhotep kept his coastguard fleet on the Mediterranean, and his brother king, Minos of Crete, policed the Middle Sea around the coasts of Crete and the Ægean Islands, the ships of Crete and Cilicia, Caria and Phoenicia, needed no longer to dread the pirates who used to swarm, but steadily came and went to the Nile mouths, bringing all the merchandise of the Levant to the quays of Memphis and Thebes, and carrying back again the fine linen and papyrus rolls, the lovely wood and metal work, and the wonderful stone vases of the Egyptian craftsmen. Down the river, and across the desert from the Sûdan, came the galleys and caravans, bringing north to Thebes ivory and ebony, gold dust, ostrich feathers, panther skins, and sometimes the live panthers themselves; while the Red Sea ships came creeping up the coast from Somaliland, the old Land of Ghosts of the ancient stories, laden with all the treasures of God's Land, and, above all, with the incense-gum for the temple services. Never was there such a time of peace and plenty in Egypt as there was for perhaps twenty years of the great king's reign.

On the whole, too, he made not an unworthy use of the riches which poured in upon him. No doubt he "warmed both hands before the fire of life," and he paid the penalty of his over-indulgence in an early death, but he did his best to make his country and his capital glorious, all the same. Like some other famous kings, Amenhotep was lucky in finding a man of genius who helped him to carry out all the plans which he had for beautifying Thebes. He was a namesake of the king, Amenhotep, son of Hapu; and we can still see his ugly, capable face in the Cairo Museum—a regular "paint me with my warts" kind of portrait. But, if he was no beauty, he was a very clever man, whose "counsel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God." You remember how Imhotep, the counsellor of one of the early Pharaohs, was made into a god of wisdom at last by his wondering countrymen? Well, Amenhotep, son of Hapu, shared something of the same fate in after days—so wonderful did his cleverness seem to the men who saw his works,



EGYPT'S UGLY WISE MAN.

Amenhotep, son of Hapu, who was Clerk of Works to King Amenhotep III.,
and who afterwards became a god.

Between them the two Amenhoteps, king and wise man, made Thebes perhaps the most magnificent city that the ancient world ever saw. It is possible that Babylon was larger, though that we do not know certainly ; and perhaps Babylon looked more gaudy, with its abundance of coloured tiles—lions and bulls in enamelled brick shining down upon you from the walls everywhere. Yet Babylon, after all, was a city of mud-brick, but the splendour of Thebes was in solid stone.

Under the guidance of the son of Hapu the huge temple at Karnak was adorned with new gateways, whose vast doors of cedar from Lebanon were overlaid with gold, and led into halls floored with silver, whose walls were inlaid with malachite and other costly and beautiful stones. Outside the gates long lines of sphinxes, with ram or jackal heads, bordered the great causeways which led up to the temple ; while outside the gates great statues of the king sat in solemn dignity. A mile and a half away from Karnak rose the other great Theban temple, which we call Luxor. The whole way to it was through a beautiful garden, and the road from the one temple to the other was bordered, like the other avenues of approach, by hundreds of crouching sphinxes. Nothing more stately and gorgeous, I imagine, has ever been seen in the history of the world.

On the western bank of the Nile also the two Amenhoteps had been busy, for it was there that the great emperor must have his funerary temple, where offerings were to be made for the welfare of his spirit. All that wealth and genius could do for the adornment of this great building was done, without counting the cost ; and perhaps the sun has never shone upon a more magnificent temple than that which once glittered over the western plain of Thebes, and has now vanished almost absolutely from the face of the earth. Luckily the king himself has left us a description of it. It reads like a page out of *The Arabian Nights*, with its tale of walls of white stone adorned with gold, statues of granite, and gates of cedar and gold-silver alloy, and floors paved with silver. " It is made very wide and large, and established for ever," says the king, and you can fancy him drawing his breath with a sigh of thankfulness as he gazes upon the splendid fabric, and dreams how through all the long ages, as long as the world lasts, it will keep his name alive, and make him immortal. Alas, for the vanity of human wishes ! Before 200 years had passed his temple was a ruin, used as a stone-quarry by one of his successors, Ramses II., whom we used to call the Great, and his son Merenptah ; and to-day literally not one stone of it is left standing upon another.

And yet, the great king's dream has not been altogether a delusion. His temple has kept his name alive and made him immortal, perhaps better than it would have done had it been left standing for 1,000 years instead of barely 200. For though there are actually only two stones of it standing to-day, they are such stones as you shall scarcely see in all the rest of the world. When the great building was rising, and the twin towers of its gateway were almost ready for the cedar doors to be hung, the king sent his namesake away up the river to



THE "MEMNON" COLOSSI OF AMENHOTEP III.

The right-hand statue is the one which used to sing at sunrise.

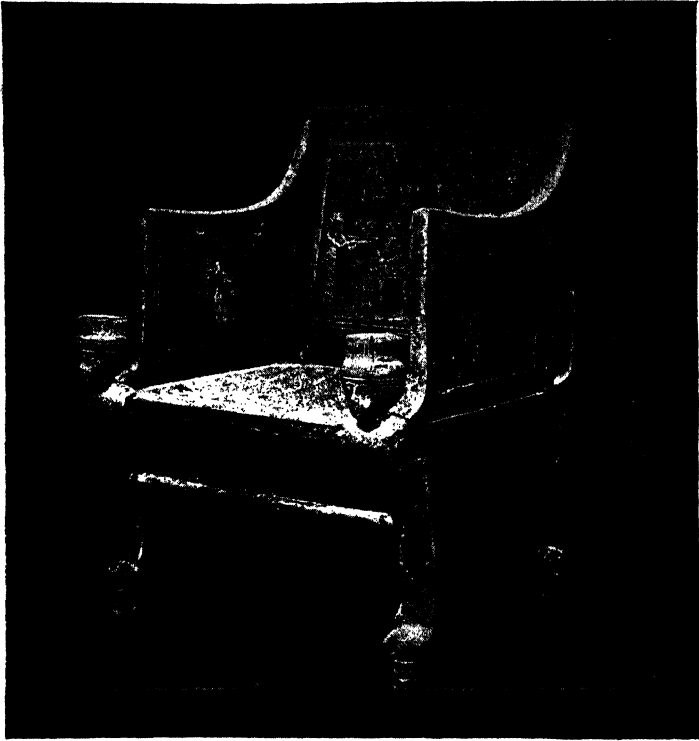
the famous gritstone quarries of Edfu to get two huge blocks of stone and carve them into statues of himself, which should sit for ever before the gates of his temple, looking across the Nile to the east and the sunrise. Amenhotep duly accomplished his tremendous task, and for 3,300 years the two vast statues have kept their long watch and ward, though the temple whose guardians they were has long since vanished from behind them. It looks as if they might stand as long as there are men left in the world to gaze upon them and wonder.

Let me try to tell you of the wonder of them. Even to-day, when they have long since lost the crowns which once adorned their heads, the great statues stand 65 feet high, from the ground to the top of the head; originally they were over 70 feet high. I should have said sit, rather than stand, for they are sitting statues, and therefore much more massive. Each was carved out of a single block of gritstone, and each block, when the statue was finished, must have weighed over 700 tons. The king's legs, from knee to sole, measure $19\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and each foot is $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, so that the king must have taken an out-size in sandals. The breadth of his shoulders is 20 feet, his middle finger is $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet long; and his forearm, from the tip of the finger to the elbow, measures $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet. I wonder how many of our engineers,

with all their modern appliances to help them, would care to tackle the job of floating these two 700-ton blocks down the Nile, dragging them across the plain, and setting them up erect upon their bases, so that they would stand for more than 3,000 years? And the Egyptians moved and set up even bigger blocks than these, as we may see later.

Two thousand years ago the northern statue of the pair was broken by an earthquake, which tumbled off the upper part of the block, down to the king's waist. Soon after this mishap people began to notice that at sunrise, when the rays of the sun struck the broken statue, a curious musical sound came from the stone. The thing grew famous, and to account for it folk said that the statue represented Memnon, the son of Eös, the Dawn, and that the sound was his greeting of his mother as she came up over the eastern horizon each morning. Tourists used to come from all parts of the Roman Empire to hear Memnon sing at sunrise, and, just like modern tourists of the baser kind, they used to scribble their opinions of his singing all over the base and the legs of the great statue. Then the Roman emperor, Septimius Severus, thinking to honour the dead hero, patched up Memnon pretty clumsily with the five courses of sandstone blocks which you see to-day, as if to show how poor workmen the Romans were compared with the old Egyptians. His intention was good, but the result was disastrous, for Memnon has never sung since. I suppose the real reason of the sound was the heating of the broken surface of the stone by the rays of the rising sun, and the well-meaning emperor shut them off by piling his clumsy blocks upon the top of the break, and so spoiled where he meant to honour. But anyhow, one way and another, these two giants have kept Amenhotep's memory alive better than any other memorial could have done it, and as long as they sit there in gaunt majesty the world will never forget the great king who set them up.

King Amenhotep and Tiy had reigned for twenty-six years before their joy was crowned by the birth of a son who should reign after them. They had at least four daughters—Aset and Hentmerheb, Satamen and Henttaneb, and I daresay they were very happy with them. We still have the little wooden chair in which Princess Satamen used to sit when she was a tiny girl, and we can see how, when the plaited string seat got worn out, Queen Tiy got the court joiner to patch it up with a wooden panel. She might be the wealthiest queen in the world, but, like Mrs. Gilpin, "she had a frugal mind." But after all, princesses were only princesses, and what was wanted was a prince. So you can understand the sensation and the joy in the palace



THE ARM-CHAIR OF AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS.

Princess Satamen's other arm-chair had been patched with wood.

when the long-hoped-for prince arrived at last, and the news went abroad over the land and the provinces that King Amenhotep had a son to wear the Double Crown when he was gone. They little knew what a tragedy the life of the young prince was to prove, or perhaps they would have been less joyful.

Nobody knew that, however, and all the kings of the East wrote sending their congratulations and best wishes, and did not forget to slip in a sentence or two suggesting that they were very hard up, and would not mind if Amenhotep could spare them a talent or two out of his overflowing wealth. Nothing lets us see the pinnacle upon which Egypt was standing at this moment so clearly as these old letters of

the mighty kings of the ancient world, who one and all would sell their souls to the King of Egypt if he would offer them enough gold as the price. "As to the gold," writes the King of Babylon the Great, "concerning which I wrote to you, saying, 'Send a great deal of gold to me before your regular messenger comes,' send it now quickly, so that I may complete the work which I have begun. If you send the gold by harvest time, I will give you my daughter. If you were to send me 3,000 talents later, I would not take it, and I would not give you my daughter." "Surely I am as good as that King of Hanigalbat," whines the King of Assyria, "and yet you have only sent me a little gold." "Let my brother send to me gold in very great quantity, beyond reckoning," writes the King of Mitanni. "For in my brother's land gold is as common as dust." One of the funniest things in the history of that old world is to see all these greedy old kings tumbling over one another in their eagerness to get their fingers into the Egyptian till, and to see how bitterly jealous they are of one another, and how they fear lest some one else should get before them in the favour of the Golden Emperor, who was meant, in their view, to be banker for all their little projects.

Now and again, all the same, King Amenhotep, happy though he was over his young son, was getting ominous letters from some of his governors and vassal princes in the north. There were stories of trouble in Mitanni, where the army of the Hittites, a new folk who evidently needed watching, had been making mischief. The King of Mitanni writes that his god has given him victory over them, so that none of them returned into his own land; but he is evidently very anxious about the business all the while. Then comes in another letter telling the king that the Amorites are making trouble among the allies of Egypt, and begging for troops to be sent, lest the whole land should fall into the hands of the king's enemies. "O My Lord, if the trouble of this land lies upon the heart of My Lord, let My Lord send troops, and let them come speedily. If the King, My Lord, will not take the field himself, let him send troops, and let them come."

But by this time the great king had long forgotten his active lion-hunting early days, and the last thing in the world that he would have dreamed of was to take the field himself. If he had done it, it might have meant the saving of his empire for his son at a later stage. But, though he was still only in middle life, Amenhotep had lived pretty fast all his days, and now he was drawing near the end of it all. The news of his sickness caused great anxiety to all his greedy friends the kings of Asia, who dreaded the cutting off of their supplies of gold.

His special friend Tushratta of Mitanni, who was both his brother-in-law and his father-in-law, did all that he could to arrest the approach of death. Somehow or other he had got hold of a famous wonder-working image of the goddess Ishtar of Nineveh, and now he sent it down to Egypt, in the hope that it would cure his dear friend, who had been so liberal with his gold. "May Ishtar, Lady of Heaven," he wrote, "protect my brother and me! A hundred thousand years and great joy may this lady give to us both." But neither miraculous images nor royal prayers could stay the dread advance of the "blind fury with th' abhorred shears." The Golden Emperor had reigned for some thirty-six years, and was perhaps nearly fifty when the great double gates of the palace at Thebes were shut, and the news went abroad through the land of Egypt that "the king rested from life, going forth to Heaven, having completed his years in gladness of heart."

comes from and can be symbolized by the glowing disc of the sun. I told you in chapter vii. how in Egypt every town had its own god, so that there were scores and scores of gods in the land, and people used to speak of "the thousand gods of the Egyptians." Really there were only a few who were thought to be great gods, such as Ptah, the creator-god at Memphis, whose emblem was the bull ;



THE NEWLY-FOUND STATUE OF
AKHENATEN.

The king who sacrificed his Empire for
his Faith.

Ra, the sun-god of Heliopolis, whose emblems were the golden disc with wings, or the hawk ; Amen, the city-god of Thebes, whose emblem was a ram ; and Osiris, the god of the Resurrection, whose emblem was the pillar. Of these, the two whom practically all the nation held to be the greatest of all were Ra and Osiris. Everybody believed in Osiris, because everybody wished to live for ever after death ; and everybody believed in Ra, because everybody saw the sun shining over Egypt every day, and knew that life and plenty came from the sun's rays. But when Thebes became the capital of the land, Amen, the Theban god, came to the front, and his priests were clever enough to tell folk that he was really the same god as Ra. So they called him Amen-Ra, and taught people that he was the great god who had given Egypt triumph in her wars with the other nations.

But gradually some people in Egypt—perhaps, to begin with, some of the old priests of the sun-god at Heliopolis—got dissatisfied with all this jumble of gods, and this claim of the upstart city-god of Thebes to be head of all the gods ; and they began to teach that the real god, and the only god, was the life-giving power of the sun, which shone from the sun-disc, and which they called the "Aten." And this god, they said, was not only the god of Egypt, as Amen claimed to be, but the

god of all the world. Now the new Pharaoh, Amenhotep IV., as he was called at first, took to these new ideas with all his heart. Even his father and mother must have known something about the new thoughts, and must have inclined to them, or they would never have called their barge by such a name ; but the Golden Emperor was too busy amusing himself to be much of a theologian, and went on worshipping the old gods all his life. But his son was of the stuff which makes saints and martyrs ; and he loved the new truth with a passionate devotion which made everything else seem small compared with it.

At first, of course, he was too young to do much for his new faith, though even from the beginning he showed where his inclinations lay by building a new temple at Thebes to the new god, the Aten. But as he grew older, and reached what in the East is manhood (though he was not much more than seventeen), he came out publicly on the side of the truth that he had been taught, and decreed that henceforth the whole nation should only worship one god, and that god, not Amen-Ra, but the Aten. The great temples at Thebes and all over the land were closed, the priests found their occupation gone, and all the people were called to worship the one new god in the new temples which were being built as fast as hands could raise them. Well, I don't suppose that the bulk of the people were much disturbed. After all, they would say, this new god is very like our old friend Ra, the sun-god, who has been shining on us all our lives ; and if the king wants us to worship him alone, it surely can't do us any harm to obey him. The courtiers and great lords, too, would go with the new ideas, because the king had set the fashion. But the priests, and above all the priests of Amen, who had been thrown down from their pride of place, must have been furious ; and the priests were by far the most powerful class in the land, more powerful even than the soldiers.



PORTRAIT BUST OF NEFERTITI, AKHEN-
ATEN'S BEAUTIFUL QUEEN.

So the young king had trouble enough before him when he threw down the gauntlet to the strongest and most united class of people in his whole kingdom, and defied them. Indeed, after a while he found Thebes so uncomfortable to live in, with the blank walls of the closed temples frowning on every side, and the shaven priests scowling at him as he drove through his capital, that he resolved to make a new capital for himself, where he could carry out his ideas after his own mind, with no angry priests to thwart him, and perhaps to poison him. He never dreamed of giving up his new religion when he saw how it was being opposed, for I think he was one of the bravest of the brave, young though he was—the kind of man who would face the whole world if he thought he had the truth on his side.

So he went down the Nile, to a place nearly 300 miles north of Thebes, and 190 miles (by river) south of Cairo, where there was a fine stretch of plain on either side of the river, bordered on either bank by hills and cliffs. We call the place to-day Tell el-Amarna, and it was there that a peasant woman, digging among the ruins of the king's city, found all those letters of the other kings of the East of which I have been telling you. There he arranged that a great city should be built, and he has left us his own story of how he came with his beautiful young queen, Nefertiti, and marked off the boundaries of its walls. The new city was to be about five miles long, and only 1,000 yards broad, for it was necessary to keep near to the river for the sake of water. The Egyptians, as we know, were wonderful builders, and with plenty of mud-brick you can build at a great pace; but even so, I fancy it must have taken two years before the new home was ready for the king and his court. He may have been nineteen or twenty years old when he and his wife and children (for he had already three daughters) landed from the royal galley on the gleaming white quay of Akhetaten (the Horizon of Aten), as the city was called.

It must have been a fair sight that met his eyes—the long white city stretching along the river-side, every house new and freshly white-washed, so that the whole place fairly dazzled the eyes in the blazing Egyptian sun. Several huge temples reared their tall gate-towers and their fluttering crimson banners above the lesser houses, and their size was matched by the vast palace which had been built for the housing of the Pharaoh and his court; while the mansions of the great nobles gleamed white through the greenery of the trees and shrubs with which their pleasancess were shaded. Away to the south, at the opposite end of the town from the palace, lay a pretty country palace, with pleasant gardens and an artificial lake, where the king could

come with his family for a holiday when he was tired of the magnificence of the great palace at the north end of the capital. The royal home gleamed with gold and coloured glazes, and its great pillared hall, between 400 and 500 feet long, and more than 200 feet wide, with its magnificent rows of columns, whose capitals were picked out with gilding and colours, must have made all other palaces on earth look paltry.

Here, then, King Amenhotep IV. and Queen Nefertiti settled down to rule and to teach their new faith. The king was not to be known henceforth, however, by a name which means "Amen is Satisfied." The very name of the ancient god was hateful to him, and he changed his name to Akhenaten—"The-Aten-is-Content." East, west, north and south he marked off the limits of the territory of his city by carved pillars, on which he stated that he would never go beyond these bounds on any side, but would live—and hoped to be buried—within them. Thus he made for himself a sort of small sacred island in the midst of his kingdom, where nothing might come that was not pure and holy; and here he spent his time worshipping the god for whose sake he had changed the whole face of Egypt, and in writing psalms to his glory. What can I tell you about this god? Not a very great deal, but this at all events. First, that he was god alone—the one true god, as against the thousand gods of the old faith. Next that he was not to be worshipped by a graven image, but was only to be thought of by his simple emblem of the sun-disc, often with its rays ending in hands which give life and blessing to the worshippers. Then, that he was a god of what the Hebrews called "loving-kindness," who was gentle and merciful to everybody and everything, down to the tiniest of his creatures. And perhaps strangest of all, in those days of narrow and bitter national hatreds, that he was the god of all nations, and loved Syrians and Negroes as much as Egyptians. A god who is one and not many, who is not an image, but a spirit, who is love and not hate, who loves all mankind and not one favourite nation—that was Akhenaten's god, for whose sake he gave up so much that his forefathers had made glorious, and sacrificed, at last, an empire.

Fortunately for us, two of the psalms which King Akhenaten wrote to his god have come down to us. They are too long to quote to you; but they are wonderfully like some of the Hebrew psalms, though they are centuries earlier than the earliest of our Psalter. Verse after verse of the longer of them sounds just like a bit of the CIVth Psalm—so much so that some people have imagined, quite needlessly, that the Egyptian psalm must have been known to the writer of the Hebrew

nature hymn. They are very simple and childlike in the pictures which they draw of God's care for His creatures. Here is a verse about the least of God's creatures :

" When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the shell,
Thou givest him breath therein to preserve him alive.
When thou hast brought him together
To the point of bursting out the egg,
He cometh forth from the egg
To chirp with all his might.
He strutteth about on his two feet
When he hath come forth therefrom."

You can see the little creature, so pleased with himself, and yet so helpless ; and the good God, says Akhenaten, who cares for you, cares also for the chick. The Egyptian Pharaoh would have said Amen to the Ancient Mariner's last word to the Wedding Guest :

" He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man, and bird, and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

Now, there was one thing which followed from a religion like that. Perhaps the king did not see it at first, or his courtiers either, but soon it came to be forced upon him. If God loves everybody like that, black or white or yellow, Egyptian or Syrian or Negro, then there ought to be no hatreds between nations, and no wars. The world which such a God made ought to be a place of peace. When that thought came into Akhenaten's mind, we don't know ; indeed, we can only believe that it must have come by seeing what his conduct was when the call for war came to him.

You remember how I told you that away up north the Hittite king with that delightful mouthful of a name, Shubbuliuma, had for years been stirring up the Amorite chieftains to rebel against their Egyptian overlord. The Amorites were quite ready, for they had not seen an Egyptian soldier for many a year, and had begun to wonder if there was an Egyptian army left. Even before Akhenaten's father died, they had begun to pick at the fringes of the Egyptian provinces in Asia, and cut off a little bit here and a little bit there ; and now, when they saw no signs of the new Pharaoh leading his army up into Syria, they began to get bolder, to attack the native chiefs who were govern-

ing the provinces for Egypt, and to make mischief everywhere. If old Thothmes III. had been on the throne when the reports about their little games began to come in, he would have been up into Syria as fast as chariots could drive or infantry march, and Abdashirta and Aziru and Company would have scuttled to their holes like rabbits, and never dared to show face again ; but now things were different.

Most of all the man on the throne was different. It was not that he did not hear of all the ongoings of the plotters and tricksters up in Syria. Letters were coming in to his Foreign Office at Akhetaten nearly every week, written in the quaint arrow-headed characters of Babylonia on clay tablets, telling him of the rebellion of this town, or the siege of that town, which was loyal to Egypt, and asking him to send troops for God's sake before his empire fell to pieces. Sometimes the letters sound strangely pathetic, even to-day when the anxious men who wrote them have been dust and ashes for 3,000 years. Here is a scrap from the little city of Tunip, away up beyond the Lebanons : " And now Tunip, your city, weeps, and her tears are running, and there is no help for us. For years we have been sending to our Lord, the King, the King of Egypt ; but there has not come a word to us from our Lord, not one." It seems such a little help that the loyal governors ask. Just a handful of Egyptian soldiers, a score or two of archers, or a few chariots, just to let the rebels see that Egypt has not forgotten, and that she is coming. Only the flutter of the Egyptian banner in the field, or the glitter of the Egyptian spears, and it will mean salvation for the weary men who are holding the pass for Egypt, and watching with tired eyes for the help that never comes. When you read their letters, you wonder how a king could ever have the heart to resist such entreaties ; it seems as unbelievable as it would seem if you were told that Queen Victoria had refused to send Havelock and Colin Campbell to the relief of Lucknow.

But you know what I told you of what Akhenaten believed about God. I do not know whether it was actually that belief which kept him back from sending the troops that his faithful servants asked for. Perhaps there were other reasons of which we do not know, or perhaps there were advisers at the king's court who had had their palms oiled by the bribes of the Syrian rebels, and who persuaded the king that all this talk of danger to the empire was nonsense. We do not know, and never shall ; all we can say is that the king acted, or rather refused to act, as if he believed that all fighting was a crime, even if it was only to help the men who were holding his towns for him in Syria. If it was so, and King Akhenaten was the first maker of a Peace Pact,

with his own soul, perhaps you can sympathize a little with the poor young king, and understand what a martyrdom he had to go through, as week by week the dispatches came in, each painting a blacker picture than the one before it, and all calling for the help that he could have given so easily if only he could have been false to his convictions. He had an army that would have scattered the rebels like dust, and that must have been chafing more and more as each letter came in ; and he must have known that he was getting more and more unpopular with his people as word came in continually of more towns lost in Syria, and more tribes revolting against the Egyptian rule. People would begin to say that all this misfortune was not to be wondered at since the old gods had been forgotten and their temples closed ; and the army would begin to wonder what was the use of serving a Pharaoh who seemed determined never to lead them to battle.

One of the greatest troubles of all was that poor Akhenaten had no son to take up the work when he laid it down. He had seven daughters, though one of them died young ; and he did his best to make sure that one of them would come to the throne by marrying the eldest and the third (the second had died) to powerful nobles of the court, in the hope that one of the husbands would claim the throne in right of his wife. But he knew well enough that the Egyptians were never fond of having a queen to reign over them, though they honoured women so much, and he must have been pretty sure that neither Semenkharu, the husband of his eldest daughter, or Tutankhaten, the young boy who was married to the third princess, Ankhesenpaaten, was ever likely to stand against the priests, who were clamouring for a return to the old faith. And then, he knew that he was not to live long. He had always been delicate, and must have had a fight against weakness all his days. Now, he knew that those days were numbered, and that before long he would be released from the bearing of a burden which had grown too heavy for him. I daresay that in one way he was not sorry for that, but he must have sorrowed at the thought of leaving his work only half done, and his beautiful young wife and daughters to face the hatred and persecution which he knew well enough would come upon them as soon as he was gone. One way and another, the load got so heavy that the breaking strain was reached, and the frail thread of the king's life snapped. He was only a young man still when he died—not more than twenty-nine probably ; but he had done and suffered more in his short span than most men do in a long life.

Three thousand two hundred and fifty-seven years after his death the American excavator, Mr. T. M. Davis, who was digging in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, found a small tomb, and in it a richly decorated and gilded coffin, within which was the mummy, or rather the skeleton—for there was little more—of some one who had evidently been of royal rank. At first he thought that he had found the body of Queen Tiy, Akhenaten's mother, for some of the vases and other things in the tomb bore her name. But when he sent the bones to Professor Elliot-Smith to be examined, the professor wrote back: "Is there not some mistake? Instead of the bones of an old woman, you have sent me those of a young man." There was no mistake, and gradually the story became clear. When poor Akhenaten died he had been buried, as he hoped to be, in his own dear city of Akhetaten. But, soon after his death, the priests of Amen triumphed. The new king, Tutankhaten, was obliged to give up his father-in-law's faith, and to call himself Tutankhamen, and go back to the worship of the old gods once more. The court left Akhenaten's city, and in a few years there was no living creature in it but the bats and the owls. The friends of the dead king would not leave him lying there in his desolate tomb. So they brought him back to Thebes and buried him, likely at night and by stealth, in the Valley of the Kings, beside his mother, Queen Tiy. But somehow or other the priests of Amen heard of what had been done; there was not much that they did not hear of. They were not of the temper of the Emperor Charles V., who, when his courtiers advised him to tear the body of Luther out of its tomb and scatter his ashes, replied scornfully: "I war not with the dead." They never mentioned their dead king by name, but always called him "that criminal of Akhetaten," and they tried to destroy every trace of his having ever reigned.

So when they heard that he had been buried beside his mother, they came to the tomb, resolved that Queen Tiy should no longer be shamed by having the dead body of her heretic son lying beside her. They took away her body to another tomb, so that it has never been found to this day; they cut out Akhenaten's name wherever they could find it on the wrappings and the coffin which held him; and they left him to lie alone and dishonoured, having destroyed, as they vainly thought, his hope of immortality in the other world. So he lay for more than 3,000 years, while empires and faiths rose and fell in the world to which he had once tried to teach the faith of a God of love and mercy. And now he has been found again; it is the names of his enemies that have been forgotten,

while his own name, that they tried to destroy for ever, is better known than that of any other king of that old world in which he lived. We know him now as a true Prince of Peace—one of those great men who are born, as it were, before their time ; for the world is only beginning to understand to-day, after so many centuries, how true were those ideas of his for which, perhaps, he threw away his empire. When you think of how he found Egypt—the first power in the world, rich, prosperous, and courted by all the nations of the Ancient East ; and how he left it—broken, impoverished, torn with strife within and threatened by enemies without, it seems perhaps as if his life had been a great mistake. And yet—who knows ?

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BOY-PHARAOH AND HIS GIRL-QUEEN

"FIRST," said Mr. By-ends of Fair-Speech to Christian and Hopeful when they overtook him on the Pilgrim Way, "we never strive against Wind and Tide. Secondly, we are always most zealous when Religion goes in his Silver Slippers; we love much to walk with him in the street, if the Sun shines and the people applaud him." I expect that from the beginning to the end there had always been a good many relations of Mr. By-ends among the men who followed Akhenaten's new faith. It was a good thing to be on the same side as Pharaoh. There were nice fat pickings going for the man who diligently attended the Aten temple and whose voice was loudest in the singing of the hymns to the Aten—comfortable jobs about the palace, and rich endowments in the temple service, and gold collars to be had when the king distributed honours at the great festivals. No doubt there were some true men who believed with all their hearts in what their king preached and sang to them; but there were far more who only played at believing, because it was to their interest to do as the king wished. So now, when poor Akhenaten had been laid in his lonely tomb among the hills behind the Holy City that he had loved so well, the end of the faith for which he had sacrificed so much was not long in coming. The sun was shining on the other side of the road now, and the Aten faith, instead of walking in silver slippers, was in rags, and there were no more favours to be hoped for from it. So all these fine-weather friends went over to the other side, and shouted as loudly for Amen as they used to do for the Aten—louder, perhaps, so that folk might forget what they did in the past.

When the king died, his son-in-law Semenkhar, who had married his eldest daughter Meritaten, claimed the crown in right of his wife, which was a perfectly good claim, according to the old Egyptian custom; but he did not reign for long. Either he died, or was got rid of in some way; unpopular kings have never lived very long in the East. And the next puppet who was set up on the throne was

the boy who had been married to Akhenaten's third daughter, Ankhsenpaaten. He was of noble blood, of course, and may even have been one of the royal family ; but he cannot have been much more than nine years old, and his wife may have been of much the same age. You can pity the two poor little children who were thus set upon a tottering throne in the midst of a furious flood of religious strife. Tutankhaten, no doubt, was fond of his dead father-in-law, and his wife loved and honoured her father's memory ; but what could a pair of infants do to uphold his cause when grown men were fighting furiously against it, and there were ten enemies for one friend of the truth ? Some of the dead king's friends and ministers of state no doubt struggled as long as they could to keep things going as he would have had them go ; but that was not for very long. The first sign of the triumph of the old gods was that the little Pharaoh and his wife were obliged to move their court away from the heretic city and back to Thebes. Then, as the priests of Amen grew more confident that their cause was on the top of the wave, came the demand that the hated name of Akhenaten's god should no longer sound in the Pharaoh's name or that of his queen, and Tutankhaten had to alter his name to Tutankhamen, and Ankhsenpaaten hers to Ankhsenamen. Perhaps that did not do them much harm, though one can imagine that they were indignant at having to dishonour the memory of the faith of the dead like that ; but then there came worse things. All over the land a savage persecution broke out against the men who had stood by the dead king while he was alive. I do not know if many of them were killed, though that is likely enough, for there have been no more merciless men on earth than the priests of all ages in their day of power ; but whether there was killing or not, the priests of Amen did what they believed to be a far more deadly thing than killing a man's body—they tried to kill his soul. You know that every Egyptian believed with all his heart in the life beyond death, and believed, too, that his share of that life depended on his name being remembered and prayed for, as the inscriptions on his tomb asked. If his name was blotted out and forgotten, then his chance of everlasting life was gone.

So, all over Egypt messengers were sent out by the priests, whose job it was to break into the tombs of all the men who had followed Akhenaten, and to cut out their names from their coffins, and from the wrappings of their mummies, and from the inscriptions on the walls of their burial chambers. Even if a man was still alive, he would have his tomb ready, as every Egyptian tried to have ; and these



THE BOY-PHARAOH TUTANKHAMEN.

This is the beautiful mask of gold and costly stones which was found in his coffin.

(Photo, Dr. Howard Carter.)

persecutors forced their way into these tombs also, and hacked out the names from the walls, and all the beautiful pictures of offerings to Aten from the scenes on the walls. All the temples of the dead king's god were destroyed, and the stones of them used to build fresh additions to the temples of Amen ; and wherever the name of Aten could be found, it was mercilessly hacked and hammered out. To-day, in the middle of some of the wonderfully beautiful pictures on the walls of some of the Egyptian temples, you can see the blank spaces where there was once a carving of the sun-disc with its bountiful hands, and a figure of King Akhenaten offering flowers or fruits to his gentle god. It seems terribly small and mean, doesn't it ? But men can be dreadfully mean when they are blinded by passion.

What could the poor little Pharaoh and his queen do to stop this fury of hatred ? They could do nothing—that was the tragedy of it. They had just to sit there on their golden throne, honoured by everybody, as the pretence was, and see the things they had been taught to love being despised and insulted and destroyed from one end of the land they were supposed to rule to the other. I fancy the two poor children had many a sore heart over it all. Perhaps the worst of all was that their names were used in the very decrees which ordered these things to be done, as if they had ordered and approved of them. I suppose you have all seen photographs of the wonderful golden throne of Tutankhamen, with its exquisite pictures of the king and queen in enamels and glazes set in the gold. Well, if you could look closely at that throne, you would see how it bears evidence to the persecution of the very name of Aten. The throne was made for the little king before the priests of Amen had triumphed, and his name had been written in several places in the decoration, both in the gold and in the enamels. When the priests won, and the nation went back to its old gods, and the persecution began, some one must have said that it would never do to have the hated name jeering at them from the very throne of Pharaoh. So they went over the gold-work, and wherever they found the name Tutankhaten, they altered it to Tutankhamen. That was quite easy, for gold is soft and easily worked ; but when they came to the enamels it was a different story. They couldn't be changed without smashing up the whole picture ; and so they had to be left, after all, and you can still see the two names on the one throne, telling of the fortunes, and the paltry meannesses, of a great religious battle.

Poor young Tutankhamen and his young queen reigned for a few years—not more than nine at the most ; and if you can imagine



THE GOLDEN THRONE OF TUTANKHAMEN.

From his tomb at Thebes.

(Photo, Dr. Howard Carter.)

anything more unhappy than their position, I cannot. How would you like if some friend whom you had loved were reviled and insulted every Sunday in the hymns that were sung at your church? I imagine you would soon stop going to that church anyway. But the little King and Queen of Egypt had to go to church whether they liked or not; and this was what they had to listen to as the priests sang their howl of savage hatred against the dead king whom they had both loved:

"The sun of him who knew thee not has gone down, O Amen !
But as for him who knows thee, he shines.
The forecourt of him who assailed thee is in darkness,
But all the rest of the earth is in light.
Whoever sets thee in his heart, O Amen,
Lo ! his sun dawns."

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," but I fancy that there have been few more uneasy heads than those of the poor bewildered children who wore the most famous crown in the world for a few bitter years.

As King Tutankhamen grew a bit older, something had to be done to make a show, at least, of winning back the lost Egyptian provinces in Syria, and the king had to do what his father-in-law had always hated the very thought of, and to lead an army against Palestine. I don't suppose that much came of it, for we know that when a race of fighting Pharaohs came to the throne, as they did shortly, they had to begin at the very beginning again, and fight their way right up through Palestine from the very Egyptian frontier. Anyhow, the army was led across the desert, and had some fighting, for one of the officers has left an account which says that he was "the companion of the feet of his Lord upon the battlefield on that day of slaying the Asiatics." There is a picture, too, which shows the tribute of the north being laid at the feet of Tutankhamen ; but I am afraid that it didn't come to very much compared with the days when Thothmes III. and his men of war used to go north to present the account.

Then one day the young king took ill and died—how, nobody knows. He was just coming to manhood, and perhaps the priests were afraid that with his upbringing he might not be quite so handy a tool as a man as he had been when a boy. Anyhow, before he was twenty he laid down his weary task, and was laid to rest in a hurriedly excavated tomb in the Valley of the Kings, beside the great Pharaohs of bygone days. If he had not been very happy while he lived, at least he had a magnificent funeral when he died, and the whole world has been marvelling for the last few years at the gorgeousness of the shrines which enclosed his golden coffins, and the exquisite beauty of the equipment which this poor lad took with him to help him through the dark ways of the underworld.

Perhaps he was well out of it all, but his death meant a dreadful position for his poor young widow. You remember who she was—daughter of the man who was more bitterly hated than any other man in the world by the priests who were now in power. As long as her

husband lived she was comparatively safe, for he was needed to give his royal sanction to the acts of the men who pulled the strings, and his presence protected her. But now that he was gone she was left alone in the dreary palace, with nobody near her but men who saw in her a last reminder of all that they detested. I fancy that the young queen—only eighteen, if she was that—must have felt that there was but a step between her and death.

But she had a mind of her own, and perhaps she had one or two faithful servants still at hand ; and, above all, she had seventy days' grace. For the funeral rites of the dead king took seventy days to perform, and not even a priest of Amen would dare to meddle with her till they were over. So she sent off, post-haste, a letter to the old King of the Hittites, whom we last saw writing his surly letter of congratulation to her father on his accession to the throne. The poor girl must have been desperately hard driven before she turned to the hereditary enemy of her kingdom for help ; but she had the courage of despair, and she made her suggestion frankly and straightforwardly. Her husband was dead, she said, and had left no son to succeed him. She heard that the Hittite king had sons of a marriageable age. If he would send one of them down to Egypt she would marry him, and make him king. To make it plain that she was in earnest, she sent bridal gifts. The queen's messenger found old Shubbiluliuma besieging the town of Carchemish on the Euphrates, and when the letter was read to him you can imagine how that ancient plotter sat straight up and listened with all his ears. Such a chance ! To make Hattiland and Egypt into one great empire which would rule the whole world. Never, in his wildest dreams, had such a chance been offered to him.

But the old schemer was growing cautious in his old age. He had never been straight with anybody all his life ; how should he believe that the queen of his old enemy was being straight with him now ? He little knew the despair that had driven her to such a step, or the breathless impatience with which she was awaiting his answer. So he pondered over the business, and at last he came to a conclusion. " Send a trusty secretary to Egypt, and inquire whether things are as this queen says—then we may do business." He wrote accordingly to the queen, and you can imagine Ankhsenenamen's bitter scorn of the old fumbler when she read his letter. " A secretary, who has taken a month to come, and will take another month to go back ! What use is he to me ? By the time your prince comes, now that your foolish old bungler has satisfied himself, I shall be dead, and his chance gone

for ever. Your prince, with an army at his back, might have saved me ; it is too late now ! " I fancy that the answer of the despairing queen to the Hittite envoy was something like that, however she may have put it. Perhaps the Hittite prince was sent in the end, perhaps not—we do not know. Anyhow, if he did come, he came too late. The priests had found out about the letter, and when he came down to Egypt, if he did come, he found that there was no Queen Ankhsenamen to marry him, and he very likely shared her fate. What that fate was we may never know, but it is not difficult to imagine it : the road to the grave has always been of the very shortest for an inconvenient royalty in the Near East.

All we have got is a clay tablet on which King Murshilish II., the son of Shubbiluliuma, has told the story of the letter which came to his father from the Egyptian queen when he was besieging Carchemish, and of the strange proposal which the letter contained. I daresay old Shubbiluliuma spent the rest of his disreputable days cursing his own folly for having only nibbled at the chance when he should have bolted it whole ; but it was too late then, and the cleverest king of his time in the Ancient East found out at last that it was possible to be too clever by half, and that this was what he had been when he thought he saw deceit in poor Ankhsenamen's despairing cry for help. But she was in her grave, and sleeping well after life's fitful fever.

Then there was silence for 3,000 years, and when men began to read the strange picture-history of Egypt's kings and queens, historians wrote down about Tutankhamen that he was a stop-gap Pharaoh who reigned for a few years after the death of the heretic king, and before the strong kings of the next line took up the reins. If you look up a history of Egypt written ten years ago, you will find that Tutankhamen gets only a few lines, before the historian passes on to more important things. And then on November 29, 1922, there came a runner to Luxor, with the news that Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter had found the tomb of this forgotten little Pharaoh, and that all the wonders of past excavation were nothing compared to the magnificence that was gathered in the rock-cut chambers. For weeks the world looked on gaping and gasping at the glittering treasures of craftsmanship in the precious metals and precious stones which were carried out of the tomb to their temporary resting-place in the unused tomb of Seti II., which was used as a storehouse. Since then, though the nine days' wonder has died down, the work of removing, preserving, and cataloguing the poor young king's funeral splendours has gone on steadily, and still there is more to do before we know all the wonders

that were stored away beside the insignificant Pharaoh to whom so little attention used to be given. Till his tomb was opened no one really knew how truly those greedy kings of the East were speaking when they said to his grandfather : " In my brother's land gold is as common as dust."

Now we know ; and perhaps the most striking thing in the whole wonderful discovery is the contrast between the overwhelming magnificence of the equipment of even a tenth-rate Pharaoh, and the sad, bitter, and unhappy life of the boy around whom it was all gathered, as he lay there, glad, as we can imagine him on his dying-bed, to die and be done with it all.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TOMB OF TUTANKHAMEN

" . . . Royal state which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind."

WHEN Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter, in June 1914, obtained from the Egyptian Service of Antiquities permission to excavate in the Valley of the Kings, Sir Gaston Maspero, the Director, said, as he signed the concession: "Frankly, I do not think that the site will repay your work." For a wealthy American, Mr. T. M. Davis, had been working in the Valley for several years, and had had the most extraordinary good luck, finding one after another of the tombs of some of the most interesting people in Egyptian history. It was he, for instance, who found the lonely burial of Akhenaten, as I told you a little ago. But for some time Mr. Davis seemed to have no more luck, and at last he, too, had said that he feared the Valley was now exhausted, and there were no more royal tombs to be found. The two explorers, however, refused to be discouraged, for they remembered how Belzoni, one of the first excavators, had said exactly the same thing as Mr. Davis, nearly a hundred years earlier, and yet no end of wonderful things had been found in the Valley since his day. Besides, they had just newly found another royal tomb not far from the Valley, though, to be sure, there was not very much in it, for it had been pretty thoroughly rifled by tomb-robbers long ago.

It seemed, however, that the fates were against the excavators, for before their plans for an excavating campaign were completed the Great War broke out, and another kind of campaign had to be thought of. So the grim Valley of the Kings remained silent and desolate for a while longer. In 1916 Mr. Howard Carter, while on holiday from his war work, heard at Luxor that a new tomb had been discovered in a lonely spot above the Valley, and that the original discoverers had been driven off by an armed party of robbers, who were now busy at the tomb. The local authorities asked Mr. Carter to look into the matter, and gathering a party of workmen he set out over the hills in the moonlight, and arrived on the top of the cliff above the tomb

at midnight. There was the robbers' rope dangling down over the cliff into the black darkness, and from the depths below he could hear the sound of the robbers at work. There was no time to be lost, so first Mr. Carter cut the robbers' rope, and next he had himself let down at the end of his own rope to the mouth of the tomb. It was cunningly placed right in the face of the cliff, 130 feet below the top, and 220 feet above the bottom of the valley beneath. You can imagine that Mr. Carter had rather an anxious time as he stood in the mouth of the tomb, perched between heaven and some particularly hard and rocky earth, and told the armed robbers that if they chose they might clear out by his rope, but if they did not, then he would go up again and leave them in the tomb without any means of getting out at all. His life literally hung upon a thread for a moment or two ; but at last the robbers saw reason and departed, leaving him master of the situation.

The tomb which he had thus taken with a masterful hand from the robbers proved to belong to that interesting lady Queen Hatshepsut, of whom I have told you, though she had never occupied it, but had made a bigger one in the Valley when she became sole queen. It had nothing in it but a beautiful stone coffin, so heavy that the getting of it into the narrow entrance of that swallows' nest in the cliff face must have been a great engineering feat. It took no end of trouble to get it safely out and down to safer levels. However, the mere discovery of a new royal tomb, even though there was little in it, was an encouragement ; and when it was possible to begin excavation again, in 1917, the explorers were quite hopeful.

For five years they toiled away, moving tens of thousands of tons of rubbish, and finding little or nothing to keep their spirits up. At last there remained only one small corner, where there were some ancient workmen's huts lower down the slope from the tomb of King Ramses VI. This they resolved to explore, and if they found nothing there they had made up their minds to stop the excavations. I may tell you that all the time they had been hoping to find the tomb of King Tutankhamen, for Mr. Davis had come upon some scraps—clay seals, pottery, and other things bearing this king's name, not very far away ; but so far there had been no sign of His Majesty. On November 1, 1922, Mr. Carter had enrolled his workmen, and was ready to begin digging, and by 3rd November he had cleared away the old huts and was ready to start on the soil beneath them, which was mainly chips of stone thrown out during the hewing of the tomb of Ramses VI. above. Fortune had kept aloof from the workers for

long, and now she came with a rush almost as soon as they began to woo her.

The next morning (4th November), when Mr. Carter came to the place where the workmen were busy, the unusual silence at once told him that something had happened. The foreman of the gang led him to a spot where they had just discovered a step cut in the rock under the very first hut. It seemed almost too good to be true, but as the work went on the diggers gradually laid bare the outline of the four edges of the upper end of a stairway, and it was quite certain that a find of some kind had been made, though it was always possible that when they had dug down to the actual tomb they might find that it had never been finished or used. Step by step was cleared, and at last, when the twelfth was reached, the outline of the upper part of a sealed doorway began to show itself, so that there could be no doubt that the tomb had been actually used. Here, for a little, Mr. Carter stopped the work, and filled up the part of the stairway which had been cleared, so that robbers should not get at it ; while he telegraphed to Lord Carnarvon in England, telling him of the find, and asking him to come out at once. By the 21st November he was at Luxor, and the clearing of the stairway went on.

Soon the workers got down sixteen steps, and now the whole of the sealed doorway was to be seen, and, along with the seals of the inspectors of the ancient Theban necropolis, there were the seals of King Tutankhamen, just as they had hoped. Then, when the seals had been carefully photographed, and impressions of them taken, the door was opened, and a sloping passage was revealed leading, when it had been cleared of the rubbish which blocked it, to another sealed doorway. On 26th November Lord Carnarvon, his daughter, Lady Evelyn Herbert, and Mr. Carter, stood before this second blocked doorway, and Mr. Carter, with trembling hand, removed enough of the blocking to allow of a candle being held so as to permit of a view of what was beyond. Then he peered within, the others standing close behind him, shaking with impatience and eagerness.

"At first," says Mr. Carter, "I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker ; but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold—everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment—an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by—I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, 'Can you see anything?' it



ROYAL TOMBS IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS.

The two dark figures are looking down into Tutankhamen's tomb. The large tomb to the left is that of Ramses VI.

(Photo, Rev. P. B. Fraser, M.A.)

was all I could do to get out the words, 'Yes, wonderful things.' Then, widening the hole a little further, so that we both could see, we inserted an electric torch."

Wonderful, indeed, were the things which even this first glance had revealed; and when the hole had been widened a little more still, so as to allow of Mr. Carter getting into the room, we need not wonder that Lord Carnarvon said that it was as hard to get him out

again as to get a ferret out of a rabbit-burrow full of rabbits. For the first time in the history of excavation the tomb of a Pharaoh had been discovered, not quite untouched, for it was found that tomb-robbers had actually been within it, but so little touched that next to nothing had been stolen. Indeed, the robbers must have been interrupted at their work, for the explorers found a handkerchief lying, with a number of gold rings twisted up in it, just as the robbers had dropped it in the hurry of their escape. It was difficult to understand the meaning of the astonishing muddle of rich and costly things which the room contained, and it was only gradually that the excavators came to realize that what they had found was only the antechamber of the real tomb, and that the bigger part of their task, and probably the richer part of their find, was still before them.

Meanwhile, the first thing was to secure the tomb against the possible attacks of robbers, for already the news was spreading all over the neighbourhood, and the *fellahin* had concocted all sorts of stories of unimaginable treasures having been found. Three aeroplanes, they said to one another, had already landed in the Valley, and flown off again laden with gold and jewels. So a great steel gate had to be ordered and made, and guards had to be placed on the treasure-house, while the second thing was attended to. And that was getting ready to move all these precious things with safety. It will give you some idea of what was needed when I tell you that among the things which Mr. Carter had to buy for the safe packing of the treasures were thirty-two bales of calico, more than a mile of wadding, and as much again of surgical bandages.

So far, nothing had been touched, and nothing was to be moved until a complete photographic record of every object in the room had been taken, and this was a tremendous job. For the room looked as if it had been a storehouse for all the costly furniture of the Egyptian royal palace. Great gilded couches of unspeakably hideous design, with monsters' heads forming the ends; chariots overlaid with gold; boxes and caskets of all sorts, and of all kinds of beautiful decoration; a wonderful golden throne, of which I have already told you; withered bouquets of flowers; a wonderful casket painted with the most vivid and spirited of hunting scenes; bows and bow-cases, walking-sticks, and baskets for the royal linen—it was the most amazing collection that human eyes had ever rested upon. At one side of the room, at either side of a space which looked as if there had been an opening there which had been plastered over, stood a life-size statue of the dead Pharaoh in dark wood and gold. The king's head-dress



and his kilt were of gold, and he had golden bracelets on his wrists, and held a staff in one hand and a mace in the other. The two tall dark figures looked like silent guardians of a treasure still to be discovered.

The two excavators knew perfectly that their great discovery was less than half made. For there was no sign of any burial in the room which they had entered, and they knew that the real wonder of the tomb—the great shrine of the Pharaoh, with his coffin and all the rest of the things which were necessary for the funeral of a king of Egypt, must lie behind that guarded wall where the twin statues stood on their age-long watch. The temptation must have been sore to go on at once to break down the wall and see what lay behind it. But this they dared not do. What was lying heaped in confusion before them was in itself priceless, for no such store of marvels had ever yet been seen, even in Egypt, the land of marvels. You could scarcely move in the room without running the risk of treading upon something precious, and a careless step might have meant the destruction of a treasure of art worth a small fortune. Plainly, nothing more could be done in the way of penetrating farther into the tomb until all the treasures of this antechamber had been taken out and carefully stored away. So for weeks the work of slowly and cautiously clearing the antechamber went on ; and tourists by the hundred came and sat around the mouth of the tomb in the burning Valley, watching the movements of the workers in the dark cave below, and gasping with astonishment when some new wonder in gold and colour came up out of the shadowy depths, and was carried carefully away, scattering gleams of fire from its glittering sides, as the rays of the brilliant Egyptian sun fell upon it.

At last the chamber was so far cleared that it was safe to make a breach in the sealed wall, and a company of all the most distinguished folk in Egypt was gathered in the dim space on the afternoon of February 16, 1923, when the sealed door between the statues was to be broken down and the secret of the tomb disclosed. When all was ready, Mr. Carter himself, with one of his helpers, attacked the door, and very soon they had broken a small hole through, near the top, and were looking on something which had never been seen for more than 3,000 years, and the like of which had never been seen anywhere by living man. At first the explorers were amazed, when they held the electric torch through the hole, for there, within a yard of their heads, was what seemed to be a wall of solid gold, blocking up the whole inner chamber from end to end. Soon the hole was made big

enough to allow of the entrance of a man, and then the mystery was quickly solved. They were in the actual burial chamber of the king, and the wall of gold was the side of the great wooden shrine, overlaid with gold and blue enamel, within which would probably be another and another shrine, before the stone sarcophagus covering the coffin of the king was reached. The shrine was so huge that there was scarcely room for a man to sidle round between it and the rock walls of the chamber, which were rather roughly painted with figures of the gods. It measured 17 feet long, 11 feet broad, and 9 feet high, and was completely overlaid with gold in thin sheets, except where two of the most famous of Egyptian religious emblems, the Pillar of Osiris, and the Buckle of Isis, stood out in gold upon a background of blue enamel. Students had seen fragments of such shrines before, as they had been found in some of the rifled tombs of other kings; but nothing like this had ever been seen, and the magnificence of the thing fairly took away the breath of those who saw it. The great doors at one end of the shrine were closed and bolted, but not sealed, and the explorers at once drew the bolts and swung open the doors. Within stood another shrine like the other, but of gold from end to end, with no blue enamel, and wrought all over with exquisite chasing. The door of this shrine was both bolted and sealed, and in the meantime the seals were left unbroken. Enough had been seen to let the world know that it was practically certain that the Pharaoh lay there within his nest of shrines and coffins, and there was more to do than could be overtaken before the hot weather made work in the Valley impossible for the season. Beyond the burial-chamber lay another store-room, in which a glance distinguished even more wonderful treasures than had lain in the antechamber—in particular a golden shrine of the most lovely design and workmanship, guarded at each of its corners by free standing statues of goddesses in gold. It was plain that the tomb must be closed again, and work concentrated on the treasures already gathered, until it was possible to give the new discoveries the time which they demanded. So, after a day or two had been allowed to enable the world to have a peep at the wonders, the tomb was closed again with hundreds of tons of rubbish, and Tutankhamen was left to sleep for a little while longer in peace, as he had done for 3,000 years.

Unfortunately there followed a good deal of squabbling and ill-feeling between the officials of the Egyptian Service of Antiquities and the explorers, and it was not till January 25, 1925, that the work was taken up again by Mr. Carter. I needn't tell you the whole long story

of how the shrines were dismantled, one after the other, and the beautiful linen pall, with its golden stars, removed. When the seals of the second shrine were removed and the doors opened, a third shrine was revealed, covered with sheet gold, beautifully adorned with chased figures of the gods. It too was bolted and sealed, so that it was now certain that what was within, protected with such care, could be nothing less than the coffin of Tutankhamen, untouched since the king had been laid to his rest by his girl-widow. You can understand with what excitement Mr. Carter cut the cords of the third shrine, and removed the seals. Drawing back the bolts, he swung open the double door, and peered within—to find that there was still a fourth golden shrine to be opened!

“An indescribable moment for an archæologist,” says Dr. Carter. “What was beneath, and what did that fourth shrine contain? With intense excitement I drew back the bolts of the last and unsealed door; they slowly swung open, and there, filling the entire area within, effectually barring any further progress, stood an immense yellow quartzite sarcophagus, intact, with the lid still firmly fixed in its place, just as the pious hands had left it.” It had been practically certain for some time that the actual burial-chamber had never been violated by the greedy hands of robbers, but now there was not a shadow of doubt remaining before the spectacle of that great chest of carven stone, with its guardian goddesses stretching their slender arms around it, and the massive lid fixed firmly in position. One of the curiosities of the discovery was just this same lid. We used to believe that

“In the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part,
For the gods see everywhere,”

and it has been a shock to that pleasant faith to find, now and again, that the very best of the workers of that old world was capable of scamping his work in places where he thought the flaw would not be seen. Seldom, however, has there been seen so flagrant an instance of scamping as here, in the most sacred centre of a most sacred place. Plainly the original lid of the great sarcophagus, which must have been made of yellow quartzite to match the rest of it, had broken in the making or in the journey to the tomb. Instead of making a new one of the same stone, the lazy workmen had substituted a granite lid, which they tinted to the colour of the rest of the sarcophagus; and when this also cracked across in the fastening, they did not trouble

sheet gold, but was of solid gold throughout ! It took eight strong men to lift it, and the mere value of the gold alone has been estimated at £50,000 ! But the money value was the least of it. One has seen treasures wrought in very precious materials which were simply hideous and barbarous, and which had no value apart from that of the precious metals out of which they were made, and which would have been much better left in the rough. But this coffin of solid gold was also a piece of the most delicate and exquisite art that one can imagine. As before, it was a portrait statue of the dead Pharaoh, holding in his crossed hands the crook and flail which are the emblems of Egyptian sovereignty, as the sceptre is with us. Round his neck was a collar of many-coloured enamels and precious stones, and his body was swathed, like the figure of Osiris, the God of the Resurrection, in the most delicately chased feather-work, inlaid with beautiful coloured stones. Nothing more wonderful was ever wrought by Egyptian craftsmen than this priceless image of poor little King Tutankhamen.

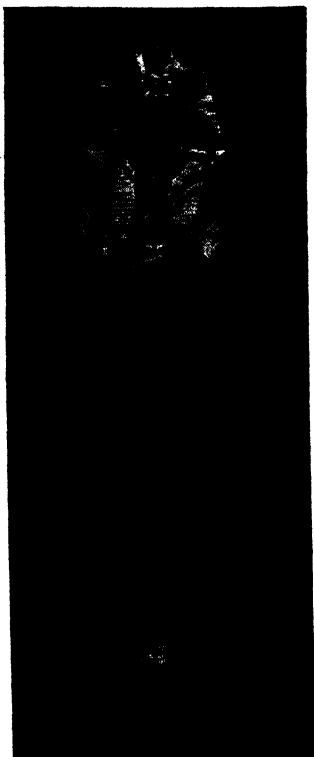
Then there followed the opening of this last costly coffin. I am not going to tell you about that, for the story of it is only of interest to men of science. All I can say is that the king's head was covered, within the coffin, with a golden mask, inlaid with lapis lazuli and turquoise and carnelian, and moulded to a most perfect portrait of the lad as he was in life. It is not only interesting as telling us what Tutankhamen was really like ; it is beautiful, for he had a noble face, and the sculptor has rendered its gentle beauty perfectly. Besides this treasure, the coffin held a diadem, such as the king may have worn on semi-state occasions, when the great Double Crown of Egypt would have been out of place. There is only another to match it in the world—that lovely coronet of gold, with its thin gold feathers nodding behind it, that Princess Sat-hathor used to wear, as I told you, hundreds of years before Tutankhamen was thought of ; and these two specimens of what Egyptian designers and workmen could do 3,000 and 4,000 years ago make our modern crowns look vulgar and tawdry, as if they had been made for profiteers, who only wanted to show off their wealth. Then there were bracelets and necklaces, and collars of gold and enamels and beautiful stones, daggers of gold and lapis lazuli, perfume boxes of gold and silver, and rings of all sorts, set with beautiful coloured stones.

There were other marvels heaped together in the little room off the burial-chamber, which had been used, like the anterooms, as a storeroom for all the things which could not find room in the great burial-chamber. Of these, perhaps the most wonderful was the golden

shrine with the four goddesses standing free at the four corners, which I mentioned a little ago. It was one of the last things to be opened in the tomb. When it was dismantled (and in the doing of this it was found that even in this exquisite gem of workmanship the workmen had carelessly placed the guardian goddesses at the wrong corners, and had made other mistakes) there was revealed a shrine carved out of semi-translucent alabaster—one of the loveliest things imaginable. When its lid was raised, four portrait heads of the king, carved in alabaster, were disclosed. These were the stoppers of four small nests which occupied the space of the alabaster shrine, and when they were withdrawn it was found that each nest held a small gold coffin, a perfect copy of the great golden one in the burial-chamber. These tiny coffins were used, in accordance with the old Egyptian custom, to hold parts of the body of the dead king.

But one could go on endlessly telling you of the marvels of art and of wealth which were gathered in that comparatively small and roughly finished tomb in the Valley of the Kings. I have scarcely done more than mention some of the things which were piled together in the antechambers, and yet they were worth a king's ransom. There were the chariots, for instance, in which poor Tutankhamen and his young queen may have taken their drives abroad through Thebes on state occasions. You wouldn't

think much of an Egyptian chariot nowadays as a speed machine, I daresay, though some of them are so light, with their slim bentwood frames, that a man can hold one up in one hand; so that a couple of fast horses would whirl them along at a good rate. But, whatever their speed may have been, you have seen nothing so beautiful in motor-cars as these chariots of the Egyptian king. They are covered,



THE GOLDEN COFFIN OF
TUTANKHAMEN.

£50,000 worth of solid gold, with
costly stones and enamels.

(Photo, Dr. Howard Carter.)

every inch of them, with gold, and wrought all over with lovely figure and feather patterns. The leather of their harness has all gone into a sticky mass with age, but it was all mounted with gold and coloured stones, and the whole turn-out must have flashed in the bright sunlight of Upper Egypt like Elijah's chariot of fire.

There was the painted casket which I mentioned in a word before. It was evidently painted by a great Egyptian artist, and its hunting scenes are full of dash and go. Pharaoh whirls in his chariot against the lions or the gazelles, or against his enemies of the north or the south, and you see the foes falling in heaps before the royal arrows, or the great beasts roaring defiance, or turning in agony to bite at the shafts that have pierced them. Poor young Tutankhamen—little chance had he ever to do such feats as his forefather, Amenhotep III., had gloried in! Inside the casket was an amazing jumble of personal relics of the king's toilet—among them some pairs of his sandals. I don't know if, in these modern days, you have ever heard of the old negro song, "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers!" but if you want to see them you have only to go to the Museum at Cairo, and see how Pharaoh was shod 3,000 years ago. Not very comfortable, perhaps, but then how magnificent! Yet possibly Tutankhamen might have said Amen to the Roman lady's answer to the flatterer who praised the splendour of her life: "Is not that a beautiful and well-made shoe; and yet you would not believe how it pinches me sometimes."

I can only mention one thing more out of the scores and scores of others that seem to clamour for notice—and that is the golden throne, which, as I told you, had to be altered a little when the priests got the upper hand, and Tutankhamen had to change his faith and his name. There is just one older throne that I know of in the world, and that is the curious stone throne of King Minos (of Minotaur fame), which Sir Arthur Evans found in 1900 at the palace of Knossos in Crete. Tutankhamen's golden throne may be a hundred years or more newer than that uncomfortable old seat, but it makes up for its comparative newness by being far more gorgeous. It is beautifully carved in wood, and of course, like almost everything else in the tomb, it is overlaid with sheet gold. The seat is inlaid with coloured glazes, and the back has a lovely panel, in glazes and inlay of natural colours, representing the king sitting on a chair, and his young queen holding a jar of perfumed ointment in one hand, and with the other hand straightening Tutankhamen's fine inlaid collar about his neck. Far more beautiful than Minos's cold stone seat, but I question if it were

any more comfortable, remembering the kind of men with whom its occupant had to do.

I have told you a little about perhaps one-thousandth part of the marvels which were gathered and heaped together in that dark cave in the Valley of the Kings, beside the body of a little stop-gap Pharaoh whom the historians have scarcely deemed worth mentioning alongside the really great rulers of Ancient Egypt—great men like Khufu, or Amenemhat III., or Thothmes III., or gorgeous men like Amenhotep III. If Tutankhamen's tomb was like an Aladdin's cave, I wonder what the tomb of Amenhotep III. would have been like if we had had the luck to find it as nearly untouched as Tutankhamen's! But it is vain to try to imagine such things, for when Amenhotep's tomb was found, it had been thoroughly well rifled ages ago; and what the Theban tomb-robbers of the old times did not know about plundering a tomb was not worth knowing.

So we have to console ourselves with the sight of Tutankhamen's lesser marvels, and to hold our breath with astonishment at the sight of what Egypt, even when she was fast going down the hill, could afford to give her Pharaoh to comfort him in the other world. But there was one thing which he would rather have had than all the gorgeous things that were heaped about him in his tomb, and that was a few days' happiness in this world before he went to the other. I question if the poor boy or his girl-wife ever had that from the day they became king and queen till the day they died; and the thought of that somehow seems to make all the gold look dim and dingy.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STRUGGLE FOR SYRIA

WITH the end of Tutankhamen's short life came also the end of the once great and glorious line of kings which the Egyptians knew as their Eighteenth Dynasty. It was 230 years since the first of them had driven out the Shepherd Kings ; some of its kings and queens had been the greatest and most famous that Egypt ever knew. They had built up the greatest empire that the ancient world had seen ; but now their star sank amid heavy clouds, the empire lost to a great extent, the nation weary and dispirited. Worst of all, there seemed to be no man fit to take up the tremendous task of lifting the land up out of the Slough of Despond into which it had fallen. When poor young Tutankhamen was laid in his gorgeous tomb, there was none left of the famous old line to lift up the fallen banner again and lead Egypt once more to victory.

There was one man who had been very prominent among the followers of King Akhenaten when he left Thebes and built his holy city of Akhetaten. He was a priest, not of very high rank, but he managed to make himself one of the foremost of the worshippers of the Aten, and he was wealthy enough to have the finest tomb at the new capital prepared for himself. When the crash came, and it was plain that the old gods were going to triumph, this politic gentleman found no difficulty whatever in turning his coat, so as to fall in with the new fashion. One way and another, he made himself so popular with the men who were now in power that, when the young Pharaoh died, people turned to this worldly-wise old priest and made him king ; or perhaps he watched his chance and grasped the sceptre for himself as it fell from the slackening fingers of the dying king. In any case the Divine Father Ay, as people always called him, remembering his priestly rank, became Pharaoh, and was master where he had once been a very humble servant. Not for very long, however. He, too, soon went the same way as Tutankhamen had gone, and the nice new tomb which he had prepared in the Valley of the Kings, since

he changed his faith, soon found a tenant. So King Ay did not make very much after all by following the jumping cat. To-day the *fellahin* call his tomb "The Tomb of the Apes." They did not know anything about the slippery old gentleman who owned it when they called it by that name, but I am not sure that they did not find out a very fitting title.

So now the throne of the Pharaohs, the proudest throne in the world still, in spite of disasters, was vacant once more. Who was to sit upon it? The priests had tried, and had not made very much of their attempt. Now came the soldiers. There was an officer in that army which Akhenaten had never used, who had proved himself very useful in settling the faithful Asiatic refugees who had been forced to flee down into Egypt for dear life when Palestine rebelled against its Egyptian overlord. He had done some fighting in the short campaign which had been waged in Tutankhamen's time, for it was he who told us that he was "companion of the feet of his Lord on the battlefield on that day of slaying the Asiatics." He had never dreamed of being king, for even after his master's death he had made himself a tomb away north at Saqqara. But now, when he saw the sceptre lying with nobody, apparently, to pick it up, he seemingly thought that it was worth his while to put in a claim himself. He was commander of the army by this time, and he was popular with the priests, so there was really no one to hinder him when he sailed up the Nile to Thebes, claimed to have been sent by the god Horus to take up the reins, and married a somewhat elderly royal princess to give him a clear title to the crown. For the next thirty-six years or so Egypt knew him as the Pharaoh Horemheb; and though he had come to his kingdom rather through a back door, he was really one of the best Pharaohs she ever had, and certainly was the right man for the time.

I am not going to tell you about his work, for it was not of the kind which is interesting to read about, though it was very necessary. Picking up the pieces and tidying up after a smash is dull work, though it has to be done; and this was just the work which Horemheb had to do. Everything had got out of order during the religious quarrels and the weak reigns which followed them. Robbers were openly going about over all the land stealing, the idle soldiers were making themselves a terror to the peaceful country folk; worst of all, the judges themselves had got into the habit of taking bribes, and nobody could count on getting justice in the courts. Horemheb dealt with all these nuisances with a firm hand. Judges soon stopped

taking bribes when they found that the judge who was found out doing so was put to death at once ; tax collectors stopped taking twice the value of the tax from the poor peasants when they realized that the man who did this had his nose cut off, and was banished to the desert frontier—the Egyptian equivalent of Siberia ; the soldiers who used to go about stealing from the country folk found that a hundred lashes was a dear price to pay for a hide worth a few shillings, and stopped stealing. King Horemheb does not make a great figure in the history books ; he did not win any great battles, or recover any lost provinces, but he set Egypt on her feet again.

When he died, he had managed to pull the country together again, so that it was a ready tool to the hands of the men who came after him. The next Pharaoh was the first of a name which was to be very famous in the world from that day to this, though we don't, perhaps, think so much of it to-day as our grandfathers did. He was Ramses I., and though he was an old man when he came to the throne, and only reigned a year or so, he set agoing the line of the Ramessides, which has been the most renowned name in Egyptian history, though actually by no means the greatest. His son Seti I. was, I think, one of the noblest of Egyptian kings, as he was certainly one of the most beautiful. One is glad that the actual mummies of these great men of the past are no longer exposed in the Museum at Cairo for crowds of tourists to gape at, for it seems a shame that these wrecks of what were once mighty kings should be humiliated. But, if anything could have justified the exhibition of these shells of dead kings, it would have been the calm, dignified, high-bred face of Seti. An aristocrat to his finger-tips he must have been ; but more than that—a strong and good man to boot. We have plenty of portraits of him as well, and they all confirm the impression left by the beautiful dead face. If ever there was a man who looked "every inch a king," it was Seti I.

All that we know of him shows that his face was a true witness for at home he showed himself modest, and abroad he proved a daring and successful soldier. He had to do a tremendous amount of building in Egypt to restore all the temples and shrines which had suffered in the religious troubles. Plenty of the Pharaohs had to do similar work but when they were done with it they always cut their own names deep over all the work, so as to claim the whole thing for themselves—much to the disgust of the students who have had to find out the truth about things, and who it was who really built the building, and who merely repaired it. But Seti was different. When he restored



KING SETI I.

One of the noblest of later Egyptian Pharaohs.

building he left the name of the original builder still in the place of honour, and only added a modest line something like this—"Restoration of this monument done by Seti I."

But his most famous work had to be done abroad. You know how Akhenaten had sacrificed his empire to his convictions, so that the Amorite chieftains in Palestine had nearly all rebelled against Egypt; while on the north the rough fighters of the Hittite Confederation had been pushing down from their mountain fastnesses in the heart of Asia Minor, and grabbing the northern provinces of the empire. Along with them, too, there had been working a set of tribes from the desert, who were pushing into Palestine and seizing all the pieces of the broken Egyptian Empire that they could lay hands upon. The Egyptian governors in Palestine called them "the Habiru," and many believe

that they were the Hebrews, who had come out of Egypt some time before, and were now taking possession of the Promised Land. But that is not at all certain, and there are others who believe that the Exodus had not yet taken place, and did not take place for a good many years after this. Anyhow, the Egyptian Empire in Asia had been broken all to pieces, and there was scarcely a city or village in Palestine which had not fallen into the hands of one or other of the enemies of Egypt. Seti made up his mind that it was time to put all this right.

Before he set out, he had his spies in Palestine gathering information for him as to the state of the country, and their report was not encouraging. Here it is—the first report that we have in full from scouts to the Intelligence Department of a War Office. “One came to say to His Majesty: ‘The vanquished Shasu, they plan rebellion. The chiefs of their tribes are gathered together, and are rising against the Asiatics of Syria’ (he means the ‘friendlies’ among the Syrian tribes—not very many of them left). ‘They have taken to cursing and quarrelling, each of them slaying his neighbour, and they mock at the laws of the palace.’”

I fancy it was pretty much what Seti expected, and he was rather glad than otherwise to have so good an excuse for interfering to put things straight. In fact he says so: “The heart of His Majesty was glad on account of it. Lo! as for the Good God (Pharaoh), he rejoices to begin battle, he is delighted to enter into it, his heart is satisfied at seeing blood, he cuts off the heads of the rebellious-hearted, he loves an hour of battle more than a day of rejoicing. His Majesty slays them at one time. He leaves not a limb among them, and he that escapes his hand is carried off to Egypt as a living captive.” No exactly the kind of sentiment for a Peace Congress, but you must remember that this was 3,000 years ago, and that there have been kings, not so very long ago, who talked quite as bloodthirstily as Seti without his excuse.

However, he had now to make his brave words good. Since war had to be made, Seti, like a good soldier, saw that it was to be made with as little suffering to his own troops as possible. The great difficulty was the dreary ten days’ march across the desert from the Egyptian frontier to Gaza. You know how our own men manage to get over the thirst question by taking a pipe line with them from Egypt. Seti managed differently, but quite as well, considering the times. He sent an expedition to dig wells along the track, and at each well a fortified post was established so as to hold the wells till

the army should come up. Some time in his first year the army marched out from the Egyptian frontier post, and almost from the beginning of the march he was in touch with enemies.

The wild Arabs of the desert he scattered like dust, and pushed on to the southern borders of Palestine, where he captured a walled town by storm. "His Majesty marched against them like a fierce-eyed lion, making them carcasses in their valleys." Following the old war-road of Thothmes III., he was soon across the Carmel ridge, and busy reducing the towns round about Megiddo in that ancient battle-ground of the nations, the Plain of Esdraelon. At the eastern end of the plain, where the land breaks steeply down towards the fords of the Jordan, he built a great Egyptian fortress to command the trade route across the fords to Damascus and the north and east. Beth-shan, as it came to be called in Hebrew days, was for long the centre of Egyptian power in Palestine. It was held for Egypt, long after Seti's days, by a garrison of mercenary soldiers, who were largely of that strange race, the Philistines. When Egypt again let Palestine slip out of her weakening fingers, the Philistine garrison handed the great castle over to their kinsmen who were fighting a life and death battle against Saul, the Hebrew king. It was to cut off the garrison of the old Egyptian stronghold that Saul was so far north with his army when he met his end, and the Philistine army that slew him and his sons at Mount Gilboa had marched north to relieve their brethren, in garrison at Beth-shan. So it was on the walls of this fortress that Seti built, and that his son Ramses II. enlarged, that the body of the slain Hebrew king was hung, while his armour was exposed in the temple within the castle. For several years the American excavators have been digging down through the great mound of Beth-shan, revealing the very walls and magazines that Seti built, and the actual shrine of the temple where the bloodstained armour of Saul was hung before the Philistine gods.

Most interesting of all, they have found in the old fortress the very pillars which Seti and his braggart son, Ramses II., set up to commemorate their deeds of war; and we learn from Seti's story both how well an Egyptian king of three millenniums ago understood tactics, and how much better a general he was than his more noisy son.

From Beth-shan Seti pressed eastwards across the Jordan. Then he turned north-westwards to where the twin ranges of Lebanon and Hermon raise their white summits above the great cedar-covered slopes which every monarch of the East coveted. The ease and swiftness of his success shows how simply Egypt might have held her empire in

Akhenaten's day, if only that unfortunate Pharaoh had deemed it consistent with his faith to send troops to help his loyal vassals. The mere waving of the Egyptian banner brought all the chiefs of the Lebanon, trembling and cringing, before this new Pharaoh, who was of a different pattern from the one whom they, or their fathers, had flouted so safely. Seti had a better use for them than to cut off their heads, as he had threatened ; he set them to cut cedar-logs and drag them down to the sea-coast, whence they were towed to the Nile mouths, to be worked up into doors and flag-staves for Egyptian temples.

So far, all had gone well ; but now news of a raid of the tribes of Libyans west of the Delta reached him, and he had to leave the finishing of his task to another occasion, and hurry south with part of his army to defend his western border. We still have a picture of the scene at the frontier castle of Zaru, when the Pharaoh marched in after his victorious campaign. The frontier canal, with its towers and walls defending the bridge-head, and the snouts of crocodiles showing above the sluggish waters, the crowd of nobles and officials, their hands full of the flowers which every Egyptian so loved, waiting for the first gleam of the golden chariot of their king through the dust-cloud that surrounded the weary army, the captive chieftains from Palestine and Syria shuffling along before their conqueror, and the heaps of spoil which were destined to be offered to the gods. At one stroke Seti had regained for his country much of what had been lost nearly half a century ago, and had set the prestige of Egypt once more high before the world.

It did not take long for his seasoned troops, flushed with victory, to scatter the Libyan raiders, and soon Seti was on the march for Syria again. This time he was to meet a foe more stubborn and more worthy than the petty chiefs of Palestine and the Lebanon had proved to be. The mainspring of the opposition to Egypt in the north had always been the fact that the tribesmen knew that they could always count on the backing of the Hittite king in all their plots. Old Shubbiluliuma had never taken the field himself against the Egyptians, but he had always encouraged the local kinglets, and had often sent them help both in men and material. In fact, the situation had been exactly like our own position on the north-west frontier of India, where the revolts and raids of the warlike tribes of the frontier have always been encouraged by the belief that if only they could make a beginning, Russia would see to the end of the business. Shubbiluliuma was long since in his grave, and the men who had succeeded him had not the

skill with which he always managed to get other people to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him, and burn their own fingers, while he ate the nuts and grinned at their sufferings. This time it was not the men of straw who had to face the storm, but the real stirrers-up of strife—the men with whom Seti had been wanting all the time to get to grips. Somewhere up among the Lebanons, perhaps at the head of the Orontes valley, Hittite and Egyptian first clashed together in pitched battle. For a generation to come the story of the Ancient East was to be the story of the rivalry of these two powers, while the other nations looked on, and hoped to gather up the fragments when the strife was done, as indeed the Assyrians finally did.

We have only the Egyptian story of the battle, and one would like to hear an account of it from the Hittite side. According to Seti he won a complete success, and at least he seems to have checked the advance of the Hittite troops, who were probably making for Palestine. When he returned to Egypt with his Hittite prisoners he left a splendid memorial of his Syrian wars on the walls of the additions which he was building to the already vast temple of Amen at Karnak. The great series of pictures, more than 200 feet in length, is by far the finest set of battle-scenes in existence, mutilated though it is. We see the Shasu (Beduin) with their short jerkins and battle-axes, fleeing before the invaders, or Seti piercing with his lance a Libyan chief, whose head falls backward as he sinks down in the death-agony. Again he whirls onward in his chariot, brandishing his falchion over the head of the only Hittite chief who dares to withstand his onset. Ancient warfare has never been more vividly presented than in these remarkable sculptures.

The Hittite campaign was Seti's last, and he seems to have made a temporary treaty of peace with the Hittite king shortly after his victory. The rest of his reign he spent in work at home, of which we shall hear more again. When he passed to his rest in the magnificent tomb which he had prepared for himself in the Valley of the Kings, he was succeeded by his son, Ramses II., who, with a good deal less of ability, had a great deal more of conceit and ambition, and deemed it laid upon him to throw down the gauntlet at once to the Hittite League.

The young king was destined to show himself but a bungling general, whatever his merits as a trooper may have been; but his first attempt against the Hittite power was quite cleverly thought out—so much so, that one suspects that he was acting on the advice of one

of the old generals who had served his father. We shall see directly what he was capable of when he had the ordering of things in his own hand. Meanwhile he struck quite a clever stroke when he seized the Syrian coast, so that he could use it as his base, from which he could advance against the flank of the Hittite march southwards. But the worst of this move was that it gave the Hittite king, Muwatallish, warning of what he might expect. It was quite evident that Pharaoh meant to come back again next season, and Muwatallish, like a wise man, at once set about gathering together all the allies he could coax or squeeze into giving him help. The result was that by the early spring of the next year he had a motley army, partly made up of native Hittite highlanders, and partly of subject allies, with a considerable number of the mercenary rovers who, ever since the fall of the kingdom of Minos in Crete, had been wandering over sea and land in the eastern Mediterranean area, and making themselves a general nuisance.

Altogether, he may have mustered from 20,000 to 25,000 men to dispute the Egyptian advance, and he led this army up the Orontes valley to where the strong city of Kadesh lay in the plain just north of where the Lebanons break down to the low country. Kadesh was the Hittite advanced post, which the Egyptians were bound to attack, and Muwatallish was determined that they should not win it without a battle.

At home the young Pharaoh had also been making his preparations. He had his own native Egyptian battalions, stiffened, as they had now been for a long time, by several battalions of the fighting blacks of the Súdán, who made, as we have learned in our own time, admirable soldiers under good officers. He had also the famous Sherden, or Sardinians, with their horned helmets and big broadswords, who made the heavy infantry of the royal guard, and with them a certain number of the scallywags and broken men of the Ægean—the same kind of fellows who were fighting on the Hittite side. Ramses also may have counted from 20,000 to 25,000 men when he marched out for the north on what was destined to be one of the most famous of old-world campaigns, in which the proudest of all the Pharaohs ran the narrowest risk that ever a Pharaoh ran of utter rout and capture on the battlefield.

I daresay that you have been wondering at the tiny armies which were to meet to fight for the mastery of the Ancient East. Both of them put together would just about make one army corps of the great armies that we have known; each of them individually may have been the equivalent of two weak divisions. And this was a case of



THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK GRANITE STATUE OF RAMSES II.
AT TURIN.

Ramesses is the most famous, but far from the greatest, of Pharaohs.
(*Photo, Mansell.*)

the two greatest powers of the ancient world doing their utmost, and fighting for dear life. What becomes of all our old ideas of the huge hosts of these ancient empires? The fact is that the historians of old times had the very vaguest ideas of strict accuracy in numbers. Anything that ran into the thousands seemed almost numberless to them, and you are pretty safe in dividing the vast numbers which they offer to you, mostly by ten at least, sometimes by far more. Assyria did once, in her later days, and in an absolutely life-and-death struggle, put into the field an army of 120,000 men—an army of the size of a single army-group on the western front in the Great War; but that

was looked upon as a stupendous effort. Nine times out of ten you may be sure that the great battles of the old world were fought, not by the clumsy and impossible millions of which the old romancers tell us, but by far handier and more efficient armies of the size of those that were moving northwards and southwards to clash together at Kadesh.

Ramses led his army north through Palestine, and took them along the coast of Phœnicia, which he had secured in the campaign of last year. Then he turned eastwards up one of the river valleys which come down from the Lebanon to the coast, marched over the watershed between the valley of the Litany and that of the Orontes, and began to descend the Orontes valley towards Kadesh. Hitherto he had met with no opposition, and as the Egyptian army marched down the long valley between the solemn ranges of hills that rose on either hand, the king and his officers were doubtless in the highest of high spirits, and were beginning to think that the Hittites were not going to look them in the face at all, and that Kadesh was going to drop into their mouths like a ripe plum. It would have been better for them if they had not been quite so confident. At last they reached the end of the defile and the foothills, and camped for the night on the slopes overlooking the great plain of northern Syria, across which the Orontes wound like a silver thread towards Kadesh, whose battlements and towers could just be seen on the northern horizon.

Next morning Ramses was early on the march. The army was divided into four brigades, which were named after four of the great Egyptian gods—Amen, Ra, Ptah, and Sutekh. Amen was the vanguard, and Ramses marched with the brigade of his favourite god. At the ford of Shabtuna the army crossed the Orontes, thus cutting off a big elbow of the river, and shortening its march upon Kadesh. So far there had been no more word of the Hittite army than if it had melted into thin air, but now two Beduin came up and claimed to have deserted from the enemy ranks. The Hittite king, they said, had taken fright because of Pharaoh, and had retreated northwards to the land of Aleppo. This was the very kind of news which was meat and drink to Ramses, who, like other emperors of more modern times of whom we have heard, had the most overweening idea of his own greatness and importance. To him it seemed the most natural thing in the world that Muwatallish, having come out expressly to fight his rival for the mastery of Syria, should run away at the very thought of meeting so mighty a man as the Egyptian Pharaoh. Accordingly

he swallowed the story wholesale, and pushed on for Kadesh at top speed, leaving the other divisions to follow as best they could. They had still to cross the ford—a slow and tiresome operation—and thus the Egyptian army got gradually strung out in four separate sections over a long stretch of country.

Meanwhile Muwatallish, who was not in the least afraid of Ramses, but who had some glimmerings of generalship in his head, was doing exactly what Ramses ought to have known that any sensible soldier would do. He was trying to get upon the flank of the Egyptian army. He had his whole army camped on the north-west side of Kadesh; but as soon as he saw that his bait had been swallowed, and that the Egyptian army was hurrying hot-foot towards Kadesh in the most lamentable lack of array, he passed his troops to the east side of the river, and edged southwards, keeping the town between himself and the advancing Egyptians, and so screening his motions from their sight. At last he had got so far south, and the Egyptians so far north, that he was right upon the flank of the second Egyptian brigade—that of Ra—as it marched up to support that of Amen, which had already got past the west side of Kadesh, and was getting ready to pitch camp to the north-west, so as to cut off the city from support from the north. The Egyptian Pharaoh and his army stood, quite unwittingly, on the edge of what might well have proved to be absolute annihilation; and one must say that if ever a king and army deserved such a fate by the bad generalship which had marked their dispositions, it was Ramses and his men. Muwatallish quietly passed his chariot brigade, 2,500 chariots in number, across the Orontes again to the western side, and they were now ready to strike such a blow as has seldom fallen upon any army.

Quite unconscious of the warm welcome which was being prepared for him, Ramses, at the head of the brigade of Amen, reached his chosen camping-ground. The tired soldiers laid aside their arms, the charioteers unyoked their horses, fed and watered them, and the brigade began to settle down for a meal. At this moment the scouts of the king at last showed some signs of their existence by bringing in two Hittite spies whom Muwatallish had sent out to see how his little plan was working. They were questioned in the usual gentle Egyptian manner by means of plenty of stick, and confessed that the Hittite king, with all his army, was hidden at this moment behind the walls of Kadesh, waiting his chance to attack the unsuspecting Egyptians.

Ramses, in a desperate flurry, still found time to summon his

staff and scold them for the bungle which his own carelessness had caused. The vizier dispatched a man on horseback (and a thing so unusual shows how desperate was the hurry) to bring up the brigade of Ptah, which was coming up far behind. There was no time to warn the Sutekh brigade, which was not yet across the ford at Shabtuna. But while His Majesty was wasting his time in scolding his officers, when he ought to have been drawing up the brigade which he had in hand, Muwatallish had already struck his blow. His chariotry swept round from under the shadow of the south wall of Kadesh, and struck the unfortunate brigade of Ra fairly on the flank as the weary soldiers marched along without a thought of anything but the dinner awaiting them in camp. The Egyptians never had a chance to stand. The whole brigade was shattered to pieces by the first charge, and Ra fled in hopeless rout northwards, to where the brigade of Amen was hurriedly trying to get into something like order before the storm should break upon them also.

The first intimation that the unlucky Ramses had of the fact that he had lost one-fourth of his entire force was the mad rush of fugitives through the half-formed ranks of Amen, with the Hittite chariots hot on their heels, dealing death on every side. Seldom has any army, ancient or modern, been in so desperate a strait, and seldom has any army been led into the strait by such blind incompetence. Ramses had failed utterly as a general, but he was now to show that at least he had the courage of a good trooper. Things looked bad enough. Ra was utterly broken, scattered like dust before the wind and with them the fugitives had swept away the greater part of Amen which had never got fairly formed. Between himself and the brigade of Ptah, which was still far to the south, lay the ranks of the Hittite chariot brigade, flushed with their easy triumph. Sutekh was so far away that the only message that could reach the fourth brigade must have been the noise of battle, or a handful of fugitives of extra agility. But the king had his own household troops, few enough, no doubt beside him; and if he had a thick head, he had also a stout heart. Doubtless, if there had been any possibility of making another bungle he would have made one; but the only thing to do was so obvious that even he saw it at once. He must charge the Hittite chariotry and try to break through to the brigade of Ptah, or at least to hold back the enemy until Ptah should come up. At once he charged, followed, no doubt, by his household troops, though he takes all the credit to himself.

In after days a poem was written on this scene, in which the Pharaoh

is pictured as making a fine speech of encouragement to his trembling charioteer before he charges. Here is a verse or two of it :

" When Menna, my charioteer, beheld that,
He became weak, his heart failed,
A great terror went through his limbs ;
Behold, he said to His Majesty :
' My good lord ! My brave prince !
O mighty strength of Egypt in the day of battle !
We are standing alone in the midst of the enemy.
Behold, they abandon us, the soldiers and the chariots.
Make a stand to save the breath of our lips.
Oh, save us ! Ramses, beloved of Amen, my good lord.'
Then said His Majesty to his charioteer :
' Steady ! steady thy heart, my charioteer !
I am going in among them like the striking of a hawk ;
I shall slay in smiting, and throw in the dust.
What is your heart afraid of about these Asiatics ?
By Amen, they are vile wretches who ignore God.
I would never turn my face for a million of them ! ' "

Well, Menna and Ramses may have had time and wit to say all that, but I have my doubts. There is no doubt, however, that the charge was made, though probably without the fine speeches ; and the very completeness of the Hittite success made them all the easier prey when they were suddenly attacked in their turn. The Egyptians had run from them like sheep, but lo and behold, the sheep had turned and were butting ! It was very incomprehensible and very unpleasant.

Ramses, encouraged by the success of his first charge, charged again and again, and at last got the Hittite chariots so far on the run as to drive them back upon the river Orontes. There, on the other bank, stood his rival, King Muwatallish, with 8,000 infantry, ready to take advantage of the success of his chariotry ; but instead of seeing them completely triumphant, as he had hoped, he saw them first checked, then gradually forced back upon the river by the daring attack of Ramses. At last Ramses, who must have known that every minute he could gain lessened the chance of a Hittite victory, made a final charge, helped by a body of recruits who had come quite unexpectedly from some northerly seaport, and before it the Hittite chariots were driven in confusion down the river bank and into the water. King Muwatallish saw his own brother, his personal scribe, and the chief of his bodyguard go down before the impetuous Egyptian assault. The King of Aleppo, one of his allies, barely escaped from drowning, and was treated with primitive first aid by his rescuers,

who held him up by the heels to let the water he had swallowed drain out of him! Why the Hittite king did not pass his 8,000 infantry across the river to support his chariotry one cannot understand. If he had done so, nothing could have saved the scanty Egyptian forces on the field from being overwhelmed before help could reach them. Instead of doing this, however, he let them stand idle on the farther bank until it was too late and his chance had gone. There have been many soldiers who, brilliant at planning a campaign and co-ordinating the movements, have yet proved themselves weak and helpless fumbler when it came to handling troops on the actual battlefield; and doubtless Muwatallish was one of these. He had shown himself a fine strategist by the way in which he manœuvred Ramses into an impossible position, but now he showed himself a poor tactician, while his enemy, hopelessly out-manœuvred, yet showed himself the better man in the actual stress of the stricken field.

And now the balance began to sway in favour of the Egyptian king, whose valour certainly deserved victory, even if his stupidity had nearly made it impossible. Many a time must Ramses have looked eagerly southwards, as the afternoon wore on, for a sight of the advancing spears of the brigade of Ptah. At last the welcome sight of Egyptian standards met his eye, and the laggard brigade came toiling up through dense dust-clouds. Ramses now had the advantage, and his enemies, caught between his own rallying force and the fresh brigade from the south, must have suffered considerably. When the fourth brigade, Sutekh, came up late in the evening, there was no longer any question of resistance being prolonged, and the Hittite army was driven off the field.

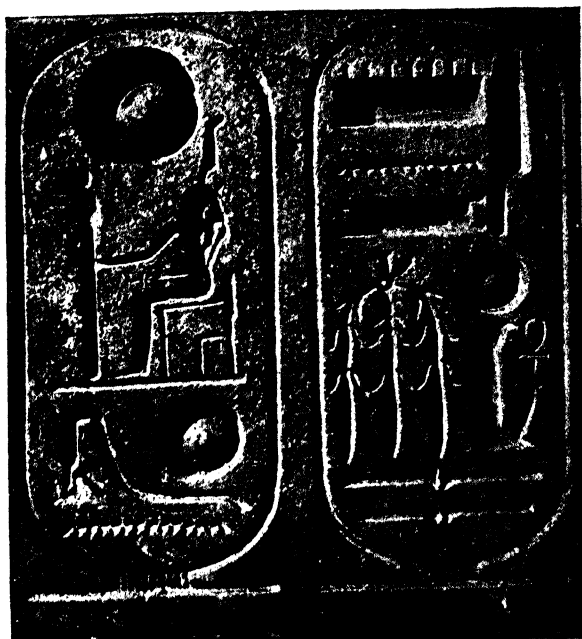
Ramses was saved—pretty much by the skin of his teeth, one must admit. But his army had suffered heavy losses, and neither Amen nor Ra can have been in condition for a new fight after the severe handling they had undergone in the flank attack. On the other hand, Muwatallish, though he had lost severely during the later part of the day, had still a considerable force which had scarcely been engaged at all. Neither king felt himself strong enough to stake upon the issue of another battle. Muwatallish, who had been driven off the field, acknowledged formal defeat by sending in a letter asking for a truce, but Ramses must have been quite as ready to grant it. At all events truce was arranged on such terms that neither party gained any advantage. Kadesh, whose capture had been the main object of the Egyptian campaign, was left untouched in Hittite hands, and the Egyptian army marched south again with nothing more

show for their labours than the boast that they had perhaps got a little the better of a hard-fought battle.

Once home again, however, Ramses forgot all the anxieties and fears of those ghastly minutes when he had seen himself in imagination dragged as a prisoner behind the chariot wheels of a Hittite barbarian from the mountains. It is almost a pity that he could not also forget his own plucky extrication of himself and his troops from the trap into which he had led them. That he could never do, and his weary courtiers must have been sick of hearing for the thousandth time the long-winded story of the battle of Kadesh long before their king was tired of telling it. It lasted him for more than sixty years, and half of the temples in Egypt are plastered over with pictures of the wonderful single-handed charge of the king upon the Hittite chariotry. The poem which I have quoted was written in celebration of the wonderful deed of the king, and copies of it were carved over and over again, until the Egyptian people must have been tired of the very sight of the wearisome old story. By and by the king grew into the belief that he had won the battle single-handed, just as George IV. used to believe that he had led a thundering charge of the German Legion at Waterloo; though one must admit that the Egyptian monarch had more excuse than our own hero.

Kadesh, of course, was not by any means the end of the struggle for Syria. When both sides had licked their wounds for a while, the truce was broken, and the strife surged up and down across Palestine and Syria for some fifteen years. At last, when both countries were pretty well bled white, and both had lost most of the strength which they shortly came to need sorely for other struggles, the Hittite king had the sense to propose that the stupid business should cease. He sent down envoys to propose a treaty of peace, and after a good deal of haggling the treaty was signed at last, and the two lands were at peace. We still have copies, from both sides, of this, the first international treaty of peace which has survived to modern times. The pity was that it came too late. Hattushilish III., who signed the treaty for the Hatti, ended his days in comparative peace and comfort; but the long struggle with Egypt had broken the strength of his nation, and after his death the end of the fine empire which old Shubbiluliuma had built up with such skill and so many lies came with startling rapidity.

Nor did Egypt fare much better. Ramses II. reigned for more than sixty years after the battle of Kadesh, married a young Hittite princess when he was somewhere between fifty and sixty years old,



THE "CARTOUCHES" OF RAMSES II.

Giving the names which he was so fond of putting upon other people's work.

and covered all Egypt either with his own huge buildings, or with forgeries which stated that he had built the buildings which better men than he had reared. So successfully did he impose upon the whole world, indeed, that up till almost the end of the nineteenth century he used to be accepted as undoubtedly the greatest Pharaoh of Egypt, and to go by the name of Ramses the Great. Great he was not, but undoubtedly we must admit that he had some good qualities, the stubborn pluck that never knows when it is beaten not least among them; and he was certainly a type which should be dear to our modern journalists, for he was a magnificent advertiser, and had a splendid publicity department of his own. Perhaps he was more like Louis XIV. of France than any other king, though he has also a strong likeness to William II. of Germany in some respects. But when he closed his long reign, and his haughty face, with the great hawk's beak of a nose

and the shrunken cheeks, was seen no more by his trembling subjects, he left Egypt well advanced on the downward slope that led to her final overthrow at the hands of a power which he would have despised in his prime. And it was the unending wrestle with the Hittites for a land which belonged to neither of them that left Egypt too weak to stand against the merciless Assyrian.

CHAPTER XXX

HUNDRED-GATED THEBES

IN spite of the gallant efforts of kings like Seti I. and Ramses II. to win back for their land the unquestioned headship of the nations which had been hers for so long, the star of Egypt had now passed the zenith, and was beginning slowly but undoubtedly to decline. There was as yet no immediate claimant in sight for the leadership. Babylon, which, for age and fame, ought to have been the leader in default of Egypt, was still sluggish and ineffectual under her foreign kings, and though Assyria was asserting herself and giving some rude shocks to the ancient pretensions of the Babylonian Empire to the headship of Asia, her time had not yet come. All the same, Egypt's bolt was shot, and she could never again hope to stand on the pinnacle which she had occupied so proudly in the great days of the past. The most that Seti and Ramses managed to regain for their country out of the fragments of her Asiatic empire was the control of Palestine, and perhaps the southern part of Syria.

But while Egypt's real power was declining, and her empire was sorely shrunken, there never was a time in her history when there was more appearance of splendour and magnificence within the land, or when the court of the Pharaoh offered a more glittering show. It was now that many of the great buildings which people view with wonder to-day were being erected, and now when the greatest of her cities was growing to a splendour which no other city of the Ancient East, save Babylon, ever rivalled, and which even the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's days never surpassed. I have told you how the Golden Emperor, Amenhotep III., made the Thebes of his day gorgeous. Seti and Ramses carried on the work which he had so well begun, and it was the Thebes of these great kings which was the wonder of the ancient world, and remained so until it fell before the merciless soldiery of Ashur-bani-pal of Assyria. Even then the Hebrew prophet could not suppress a gasp of surprise that so mighty a city should ever have fallen. "Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite," he said; "yet was she carried away, she went into captivity." Any-

thing might happen, now that Thebes had been brought low. And it was the Thebes of Seti and Ramses which so impressed the imagination of the world, that even hundreds of years later, when she had sorely fallen from her high estate, she seemed to Homer the most magnificent of cities.

Here is what he says of her, as Mr. Alexander Pope has presented it to us in English :

“ The world's great empress on th' Egyptian plain,
(That spreads her conquests o'er a thousand states,
And pours her heroes through a hundred gates,
Two hundred horsemen and two hundred cars
From each wide portal issuing to the wars).”

That, of course, is a slight exaggeration, for we have just seen that the army of the whole kingdom which Ramses mustered for one of the greatest battles of her history was not much bigger than the chariot brigade which Homer pictures coming out from Thebes alone, but it shows you how the great city had become almost miraculous in the eyes of the folk of that old world. “ Hundred-gated Thebes ” was the city that sprung to everybody's mind when magnificence was mentioned.

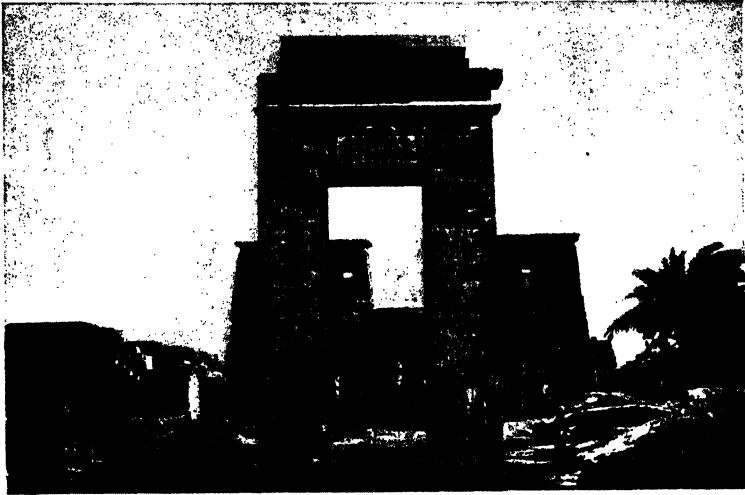
Try to imagine yourself, then, sweeping up the Nile before the Egyptian's beloved north wind, let us say in a Phœnician galley from Sidon or Byblos, which is trading to Egypt. Of course you have already passed more than one great city, which makes anything that you have seen in Phœnicia look small and paltry—Tanis, for instance, with its huge granite figure of Ramses II. towering up, nearly 100 feet high, before the great temple ; and Memphis, with its long quays along the river bank, where the ships lay almost touching the walls of the city with their long yards. Now you are to see the greatest of them all. You swing round a big bend, with two small islands in the middle of the river, and on your left hand the bank curves away westwards and southwards in a long sweep of brilliant green. Ahead of you, on the right-hand side of the river, you can see towers rising behind towers, as temple after temple of the great city of the western bank comes into view ; and now, as you round the last of the curve, and straighten up to pass between more islands, the city of the east bank comes suddenly into view also, and you have the whole fair sight before your eyes.

(Don't believe the people who tell you that, because the prophet Nahum talks of the rampart of Thebes being the water, she must have

had no defence walls, and treated the river as her only protection. No king of the old world would have been such a fool as to leave his capital without fortifications. The hundred gates of Thebes that Homer sings about were not merely the gates of her many temples, for he tells us of the warriors who poured forth from them. They were the fortified gates of her great walls, though we need not imagine that there were actually a hundred of them.)

Through the midst of the picture flows the broad blue ribbon of the Nile, dotted here and there with green islands. On the western bank the salmon-coloured Libyan hills come quite close, at first, to the river bank ; then they draw back in a great semicircle, and leave a wide bay of plain between the river and their lofty and forbidding cliffs. Across the mouth of the bay, or the string of the bow, there runs a long line of stately temples. Near the beginning of the line you can see the tall towers of the Ramesseum, the great temple which King Ramses has built for his own burial temple, where offerings will be made for his spirit. Look at the huge figure of himself that sits, hands on knees, before it. It is not so tall as the other figure you saw at Tanis, because this is a sitting statue as against a standing one, but it is even heavier, and in our modern weight would weigh 1,000 tons. One solid block of red granite 1,000 tons in weight ! And the Egyptian engineers cut it out of the quarry at the First Cataract, 135 miles away up the river, floated it down here, and set it up as you see it, with no tools but such as our modern engineers would laugh at. In front of the line stands the great temple of Amenhotep III., of which I told you before, with its two gigantic figures sitting in front of its gate-towers ; but I am sorry to say that King Ramses has been stealing a good deal of the best stone from his forerunner's temple, and the splendours that poor King Amenhotep imagined would last for ever are already beginning to look rather shabby because of his pilferings. Behind the great statues you can see the line still running on south-westwards to the palace of Amenhotep, with its lake glimmering in the sunshine.

Behind the long line of temples the ground, as it rises towards the Libyan hills, is covered with endless buildings, which show little chapels in front of them ; and away in the background, right up in the deepest bay of the red cliffs, gleam the white terraces of two great temples, one nearly 800 years old now, the other, that beautiful paradise of Amen which Queen Hatshepsut built, and about which I have already told you. The whole western plain, from the river to the cliffs, is one great city, whose peculiarity seems to be that it is



THE GATEWAYS OF AN EGYPTIAN TEMPLE.

The nearest one is the Propylon ; the farther one the Pylon.

almost entirely made up of temples and chapels. There is plenty of life in it too, for you can see hundreds of workmen coming and going among the buildings, and can catch the glitter of the sunshine reflected back from spear-tips as the armed guards make their rounds. But all the same, this is the City of the Dead, and our business lies not there, but on the eastern bank, though we may take a run across to see some of the wonders of the western city before we go.

On the eastern bank there stretches for miles a great white city, girt by white walls, and spreading away back from the river-bank far across the plain, which is wider here than on the western side of the river. The river front is all faced up with long lines of quays, at which endless rows of ships from every country under the sun are moored. Their masts and yards make a perfect forest, and the quays are swarming with red Phœnicians from the Syrian coast, fair-haired Achæans from far-off Greece, slender, dark islanders from the Ægean isles, and their cousins from Caria and the rest of Asia Minor. On the quay the noise is like Babel come back again, for you can hear almost every tongue of the ancient world being spoken volubly.

The streets that run back into the city from the river front are some of them pretty narrow, and crowded with little white houses ; but

every now and again your eye rests thankfully on a patch of green, with a big house, gay with colour, nestling among trees and flowers. It is the mansion of one of the nobles or great officials, and if you could get access to it you would find it one of the prettiest places you ever saw. The house itself is not so very huge—only two storeys high at its highest, and a good part of it only one ; but its white walls are beautifully picked out with colour, its flat roofs show gay wind-sails to draw the cool breeze down into the rooms below, and in the rooms the furniture (not a great deal of it, for the Egyptian likes better to have beautiful things, and a few of them, than to be crowded out of his rooms by rubbish) is of the most tasteful design and good workmanship. At the foot of the little park round the house is the cool little lakelet where the family bathes and amuses itself. Trees and shrubs of all kinds shade the walks, and everywhere there is a wealth of flowers, for the Egyptian loves flowers with all his soul, and from his childhood to his grave never dreams of doing without as many as he can gather around him. These pretty houses, with their little pleasantries, make a cheerful change from the long glaring lines of busy white streets.

Towering over everything else rise the great gateways of the many temples. Each gateway has its two towers, not stepped like the towers of the Babylonian temples, but rising sheer, with slightly sloping sides, from their foundations. Between the towers opens the great gate. Its double doors are of cedar of Lebanon, covered with bronze, inlaid with gold or silver. On either side of the gate, in front of each tower, rise several tall flag-staves, from whose tips float crimson streamers. Great statues of the king who built the temple sit or stand before the gate ; but all the halls of the actual house of the god are hidden from profane gaze by a high wall which encloses the whole building at every point, save where the gate opens on the first of its courts. However, we are going directly to visit the greatest of all the Theban temples—Karnak, where Amen, the city god of Thebes, has his chief home, though, of course, he has a score of other temples here, to say nothing of what he has all over the land.

Indeed, when you look across Thebes from the river, you can see at once that it is the city of Amen, for by far the hugest and most conspicuous buildings are the two mighty temples of Luxor and Karnak, which seem to make everything else look small, and both of these belong to Amen, while most of the smaller buildings which cluster under the shadow of the great fanes belong to some gods who either are of his family or are associated with him. For Amen has a



THE FORECOURT OF THE TEMPLE AT KARNAK.

In the background the great Pillared Hall. The single column in the foreground was set up by Taharka (the Tirhakah of the Bible).

family, and his wife Mut, the vulture goddess, and his son Khonsu, the moon-god, are only less highly honoured in Thebes than himself.

We have our choice of two ways to approach whichever of the great temples we may choose to visit first. Between Karnak and Luxor there runs for a mile and a half one of the most splendid approaches in the world—a great paved roadway, bordered on either side with crouching sphinxes, ram-headed, and each bearing between his paws a statue of the famous king, Amenhotep III., who erected them. Behind the rows of sphinxes, on either side, lies a great garden, extending all the way and bright with flowers. If you like, you can take that gorgeous avenue and approach Karnak from the side, where you can see its vast length straggling out behind the successive gateways which mark the different stages of its growth. But there is another way, which brings you up to the great temple by its main western front. Let us take boat and land at the temple quay, for Amen has to have a quay of his own where his great gilded barge, longer than any of our old wooden battleships, is brought up when he takes a voyage on the river.

From the quay another avenue of sphinxes, not so long as the one from Luxor, but very stately and impressive, stretches up to the great gate of the temple. Nowadays the avenue is quite short, because later Pharaohs built farther and farther westwards towards the river, ending with the mighty western gate which the Ptolemies reared, and which, though they never finished it, is the biggest gate of any temple, cathedral, or church in all the world. But the Ptolemaic gate had not been dreamed of when we are visiting Karnak, and we enter by a longer avenue, and through the great gate which Ramses I. built to give access to the hall which he had planned but had to leave his son and grandson to finish. Even as it is, this gateway, though smaller than the later one, is big enough to strike you dumb with astonishment. Everybody knows the splendid west front of St. Paul's, and how stately it looks as you come up Ludgate Hill and see it rising broad and spacious before you, with its twin towers and the great dome behind it. Well, the breadth of the west front of St. Paul's is 179 feet; the breadth of the western front of Karnak, as Ramses I. planned it and Seti and Ramses II. finished it, is almost exactly 350 feet—almost twice as broad as St. Paul's!

In front of the tremendous doorway stand two great statues of Ramses II., who never lost a chance of advertising himself, even though it was in front of work which his grandfather and his father had perhaps more to do with than himself. The whole front of the double

towers glows with colour, for it is covered with huge figures of Ramses slaying his enemies before his god, and these figures, cut deeply into the stone, are all filled in with coloured pastes, so that the wall is just a vast battle-picture. The cedar doors are plated with bronze, and each leaf of the great door bears a figure of Amen, or rather of the ram-headed being who was his emblem, inlaid in gold.

We pass through the gateway—the wall is some 50 feet thick—and our breath is almost taken away as we enter the biggest single chamber that was ever built by human hands. At first you can see nothing but what seems to be an endless forest of columns. In front of you, and on either hand, it stretches away, column behind column, till you are lost in a perfect maze of great stone shafts and crossing shadows. Gradually you begin to grow accustomed to the forest, and the plan of the great hall becomes clear. Down the centre of it, not lengthwise as in our cathedrals, but across the breadth, from one doorway to another, stretches the nave of the hall. On either side of the nave the roof is supported by a row of great columns, six in number, and beyond the nave on either side seven rows of columns divide the space into eight aisles. From doorway to doorway the hall measures 170 feet, but from side wall to side wall it measures 338 feet. If you want to get an idea of the size of the place as compared with anything familiar, I may tell you that this one room of the temple of Karnak would hold the cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris quite comfortably.

But it is not the mere size of the hall that is imposing; it is the scale of each of its parts as well. Stand here in the middle of the nave and look up to the roof. Each of the twelve great columns that support the roofing-blocks is 79 feet high. At the top each spreads out into the semblance of a huge open flower, and the flat top of the capital, on which lie the stone beams that carry the roof, is so big that a hundred men could stand on it, though I must say that I should prefer to be near the middle of the crowd rather than near the edge, away up there nearly 80 feet in the air. Some of the stone beams that stretch from capital to capital, carrying the roofing-slabs, weigh 100 tons each. Think what it must have meant to drag them up the sloping ramps of earth and place them in position! Just as in our own cathedrals, the nave is higher than the side aisles, whose columns are about 30 feet lower than the twelve giants of the nave. The space between the roof of the nave and that of the aisles is filled in with stone gratings, which give to the great hall below all the light that it gets, save through the open door. Thus the forest of columns down below is only dimly lit, and the whole great hall is in a perpetual half-



THE GREAT PILLARED HALL AT KARNAK.

light, which deepens its resemblance to a forest. To make up for the dimness, the walls and the columns themselves are all brilliantly decorated with coloured reliefs, whose outlines have been cut deep into the stone, and then filled in with coloured pastes. As you pass through the long aisles, great figures of gods and goddesses and adoring kings look down on you out of the shadows, and you feel very small indeed in such strange presences.

The great hall was begun by Ramses I., continued by Seti I., and finished by Ramses II. ; but though the last-named king did only a little of the actual building, he managed as usual to run off with most of the credit, for it was the decoration of the pillars that was mainly left to him, and he has seen to it that everywhere you look you see his name staring you in the face. When you go out of the hall by the door on the north side, however, you can see some of his father's work, for the whole of this north wall is covered with the great battle pictures of which I told you before. We see them on our visit, not as the faded wrecks which they offer to-day, and which are splendid even in their ruin, but sharp and fresh, glowing with their natural colours, just as the artist left them a few years ago. While you are looking at Seti whirling onwards in his war-chariot, will you notice the way in which the decorations of an Egyptian temple are arranged ? On the outside walls you get pictures of the great deeds of the king who built the temple, or the part of it in question—his wars, his slaying of his prisoners before the god, and so forth. But these pictures are not allowed on the inner walls. They would be far too secular for the inside of the temple, which must be kept for holy things ; and so the inner walls are covered, as we saw inside the great hall, with pictures of the gods and of the king making offerings to them. This is the rule which is always followed.

Now we pass into the great hall again, and through the door at the other end of the nave, which is really the old gateway of Amenhotep III., and used to be the west front of the whole temple. Between it and the next gateway stand two obelisks, tall, slender shafts of pink granite, nearly 70 feet high. They are already 300 years old, for they were set up by Thothmes I., the first of the conquering Pharaohs who gave Egypt her empire in Asia, but in this land of unmeasured ages they seem almost new. Then you pass through another gorgeous gateway, the work of Thothmes also, and find yourself in another great hall. Originally the columns of this hall were of cedar instead of stone, each column made out of the trunk of a single great cedar tree from far-off Lebanon. But the wooden columns did not last as stone

ones would have done, and though the hall is only a trifle of 300 years old, they have all been replaced by stone columns already. But what I want you to notice is these two tall square masses of masonry, going right up to the roof, like two gigantic pillars. They don't support the roof, for they disappear right through it ; and if you could go up on the roof outside, you would see the tips of two tall granite obelisks peeping out above the stone sheathing that you saw below. For these are the two huge obelisks, 97½ feet high, which the famous Queen Hatshepsut set up in memory of her jubilee, and the stonework around them was put there by Thothmes III. so that no one might be able to read the name of his great relative, whom he cordially hated.

Leaving the hall of the cedar columns, we pass into a maze of chambers, some of them worth noticing because they are of granite. Some people seem to think that the Egyptians always built in granite, and you hear a good deal of nonsense talked about that—such as that the pyramids were built of granite, and so on. The Egyptians were not such fools as to waste their beautiful granite and their precious time on such stupidity. They built their temples of sound sandstone or limestone, and adorned them, here and there, with granite. The great hall that we were looking at a little ago, for instance, is all built of sandstone. So it is worth your while to look at these granite chambers, and at the two beautiful square pillars of granite which stand here, one bearing a lotus carved on it, and the other a papyrus, as emblems of the two lands of Egypt—Upper and Lower. Between the chambers stands one of the very holy places of the temple ; but there is another farther on, so we shall not wait here.

Now we pass out into a great court open to the sky, and covered here and there with the remains of very ancient buildings. These are the remains of the oldest temple of Karnak, going away back to the great days long before the Hyksos came and ruined everything ; and though they are not very much to look at, they are kept very sacred, because of old days and memories. Behind them comes another great hall, which was built by the famous soldier-Pharaoh, Thothmes III., as a festival hall, where feasts of the god could be given when he returned from his victories in Syria. And behind this lie ranges of store-chambers, where the innumerable things required for the worship of Amen are stored when they are not in use. In the middle of them there is a little dark room, whose door is kept carefully bolted and sealed except when the priest of the day opens it and goes in to dress, wash, paint, and feed the image of Amen. For this is the sanctuary, the holy of holies of the greatest temple in Egypt. In every temple

that you go to you will find the same rule at work. First, the great and magnificent hall, then a hall less in size, and then, behind everything else, the tiny dark chamber for whose sake all the rest of the splendour exists—the place where the god himself is supposed to dwell. It seems a curious idea, does it not, to spend all the magnificence at the beginning, and to leave your god in a little dark cupboard at the very back of his temple? But that was the Egyptian way, and when the Hebrews went out of Egypt they took that idea with them, and the holy of holies in the Tabernacle or the Temple was just a little dark room like the sanctuary of Amen at Karnak.

Such, then, was the greatest of Egyptian temples 3,000 years ago. I don't know that you could ever call it beautiful as you can call our great cathedrals beautiful, but at least it was wonderful and imposing, and it was perhaps the most gorgeous thing that was ever created by the hand of man. I have scarcely said anything about the amazing wealth of gold, silver, and precious stones which adorned it, for there was so much to tell about the wondrous stonework, which is so impressive still to-day. We can't see the great building as it was in the days before Assyrian and Greek, Roman and Arab plunderers did their worst upon it; but the old records tell us of floors plated with silver, and doors plated with gold, or with bronze inlaid with gold; of pillars encrusted with gold and precious stones, and of vessels of gold and silver set with jewels of all sorts and colours. The great barge in which the little image of Amen went out for an occasional trip on the Nile was longer than Nelson's *Victory*, and was plated with gold from stem to stern. As you try to call up a picture of all this gorgeousness, you seem to catch once more a whisper from one of the old kings of Mesopotamia, dead thousands of years ago: "Verily in my brother's land gold is as common as dust."

What you have seen is the main building of Amen's temple of Karnak, but it is by no means all. Within the vast girdle-wall which makes a fortress of the whole place there lies a multitude of other buildings, temples, great and small, to the goddess Mut, the wife of Amen, and to the moon-god Khonsu, who is their son, avenues of sphinxes leading from the main temple to these, priests' houses, sacred lakes. In fact, the place is a city within the city. We talk with wonder of our greatest cathedrals, from St. Peter's at Rome downwards; but you could put St. Peter's into Karnak and scarcely know it was there, while you could find room for half a dozen of the very greatest cathedrals in Europe within this tremendous house of the ancient god of Thebes.

Luxor is smaller than Karnak, but not so very much smaller;

and if Karnak was not there you would think Luxor a world's wonder. And besides these two enormous houses of God there are scores of other temples to other gods scattered up and down the great city ; for the Egyptian gods are not " jealous gods " as the Hebrew God is, and they do not mind the presence of another god beside them in the least—so long as their own tithes come in regularly. But the two huge Amen temples dominate everything, and there is nothing else in the city to be compared for a moment with their mighty towers and far-stretching courts. Only on the other side of the river, where the funerary temples of the great Pharaohs rise in a solemn line across the plain, is there anything to compare with them.

And now, of all this greatness there is practically nothing left on the eastern bank, where Thebes of the Living used to stand, but the majestic ruins of the two great temples. I have told you already how the Egyptian never built his own house of stone. How was he to know that his son or his grandson would like the kind of house that he liked ? So he kept stone for the habitation of his god, and built himself a neat, pretty, fragile house of mud-brick. If he were a rich man his house might have many rooms, some of them fine stately halls, beautifully painted and furnished with fine taste. If he were a prosperous workman he would have a good, comfortable cottage, with from six to ten rooms. If he were one of the poorer class, he would have only a tiny little place, with three or four rooms, jammed close against the houses of his neighbours in a narrow and crowded alley of the great city. But whether the house were a mansion or a hovel, it was built, like every other house in Egypt, from Pharaoh's palace downwards, of mud-brick dried in the sun. Now Egypt is a very dry country, and wonderfully little rain ever falls there, at least in the upper valley, so that even mud-brick stands far longer than you would believe to be possible. But even in dry Egypt rain sometimes comes, and when it does come it makes no mistake about it. And so, what between the occasional rain-storms, and the winds, and the sands, and the passing of the years, the mud-brick houses of the ancient Egyptian folk have vanished almost as though they had never been, and it is only here and there that you can come across even a few feet of house-wall standing to show you something of what the plan of an Egyptian house was like. Worst of all, the Egyptian of to-day has found out that there is no better fertilizer for his fields than the shapeless masses that once were the mud-brick walls of the houses in which his forefathers used to live. So he digs out the *sebak*, as he calls it, mercilessly, and spreads it over his fields, and literally lives on the houses

of his ancestors ; and though he is not allowed to do this now without a government licence, the destruction goes on, and between the rains, and the ages, and the digging of the *sebak*-hunter, what was left of the old houses is rapidly passing away from the earth, or into the earth again. So you needn't wonder that, apart from the ruins of the great temples, Thebes of these great old days has dissolved, like the " cloud-capped towers " that Prospero speaks of, and

" Like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Left not a wrack behind."

Nowadays there are hotels enough at Luxor, the modern town which has grown up where Thebes used to stand. There are also, perhaps, the cleverest forgers of sham antiquities in the world, who make a living out of the touching faith of the tourists, who believe that all that glitters must be gold, and everything that looks ancient in Egypt must be ancient. But the mighty city which was the wonder and admiration of the ancient world has all but totally disappeared, and all that is left of " populous No, that was situate among the rivers," is the vast mass of Karnak and the stately grace of Luxor, looking down on the unchanged river and plain that were there even before their towers were built, and that will be there even after they too have disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXI

A CITY OF THE DEAD

WE have seen a little of the greatness of Thebes in the days when it was the greatest city of the old world, but we have to remember that the town on the eastern bank of the Nile was only part of the city, and that the other part was perhaps not much inferior, even in size, and probably not at all inferior in splendour, to the city of the living, to which it looked across the river. During the Great War our soldiers had a phrase which they used about any one of their companions who had been killed in battle or had died of wounds or sickness. He had "gone west," they said—rather a pretty way of putting a sad truth, if you think of it, with its suggestion of the evening and the sunset. Well, an old Egyptian would have understood quite well what was meant if that phrase had been used to him; for all good Egyptians "went west" when they died, and they thought of the Land of the West as the happy place where all wrongs are righted and the weary find rest. Here is a scrap of an old song about that beautiful land as the Egyptian thought about it. "That land, free of enemies!—all our kinsfolk from the earliest day of time rest within it. The children of millions of millions come thither, every one. For none may tarry in the land of Egypt; none there is that passeth not away thither. The span of our earthly deeds is as a dream; but fair is the welcome that awaits him who has reached the hills of the West." And here is another little verse from another old song, as it has been put into English verse by Miss M. A. Murray, who has done so much to teach us about Egypt and its people:

"I follow my angel to the sunset, the sunset,
Over the beautiful roads of the West;
I pass to my God through the sunset, the sunset,
There will my heart have rest."

If you will look at a map of Ancient Egypt you will see that nearly all of the great cities and towns were on the eastern bank of the river, so that they looked across to the west and the sunset; and you will find

that the western bank of the Nile is honeycombed, for hundreds of miles, with the remains of other kinds of cities—cities of the dead. It was a gentle and beautiful idea which made the folk of those old days believe that their friends, when they left them, crossed the great river and went into the sunset land to happiness and peace.

Now Thebes, like all the other cities, had its City of the Dead, and it, too, was on the western bank of the river. For centuries, as the great town on the eastern bank had been growing in size and importance, this quiet city on the western bank had been growing also. Every new magnificence that sprang up on the Arabian side of the Nile was matched by another that rose on the Libyan side, until at last the great river ran between two great gatherings of all that was splendid and beautiful in Egyptian art and architecture, and reflected in its calm waters an endless succession of temples and towers, statues and obelisks on both sides. And while the Thebes of the Living offers to us to-day two temples which are greater than anything that is left on the opposite bank, it is Thebes of the Dead that has kept for us nearly all the treasures of the ancient glories and riches of Egypt which have come to light from her ancient capital. For the Egyptians, as you know, believed that the life of their dead friends in the Land of the West was of very much the same kind as, though better than, the life which they had led before death; and so when they sent them off on their last journey across the Nile towards the sunset, they sent with them the very best that they could find or spare of what might be most useful to them in the new world. The result was finally that I suppose there never was in the world another patch of ground which for a while held as much wealth as that bay in the Libyan hills and the winding valley behind the cliffs—perhaps altogether about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long by $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles broad—where Thebes's City of the Dead grew up. For a while, I have said, and you will soon see the reason. Probably most of the wealth did not stay there for very long.

So now we are going to cross the river and visit the Western City of Thebes. To-day, of course, there is nothing left that looks like a city at all. Some of the great temples whose towers we saw as we came up the river to Thebes are still standing, though sorely ruined, and some of the tomb chapels still remain; but most of what used to be long streets of tombs, with their chapels, now only show gaping mouths of dark shadow, and the great walls which used to surround the City of the Dead have vanished as utterly as have those which used to defend the City of the Living on the opposite bank. There were once five separate walls ringing about the Western City; so

you can judge if it is likely that the Eastern one was left without any, as some would have you believe. When the famous Pharaohs of Thebes were ruling Egypt, Thebes of the Dead crowned the western bank of the Nile with miles of strong walls and towers ; its population was not only the quiet dead in their tombs, but thousands of busy workmen and thousands of, shall we say, not so busy priests ; and the city had its own staff of officials, and its own mayor, who rejoiced in the title of Prince of the West, and had under him a strong force of armed police to keep order among the workmen, who were often unruly, and to watch that thieves did not break into any of the tombs. He wasn't always successful in either of these tasks, as perhaps we may see.

The first thing we see as we cross the river is that couple of huge statues of the Golden Emperor, Amenhotep III., of which I told you. They sit out in front of all the other ruins in lonely majesty—a wonderful pair. Behind them, and a little to the north-east, stands the mighty ruin of the temple of Ramses II., which people call the Ramesseum. It is not so big as either Karnak or Luxor, but it is only second to them, and anywhere else it would seem gigantic. Everybody knows York Minster and Ely Cathedral. Well, the Ramesseum is a little longer than York Minster and just about as long as Ely, while it is as broad as both of them put together. Look at the strange pillars which once held up the roof of its great second court. The swathed figure which forms the front of the pillar is the God of the Resurrection, Osiris, who always appears as you see him here, wrapped round like a mummy, with his hands holding the crook and the whip, the emblems of kingship. But the wonder of the place is the heap of broken granite which lies beside the pillars. Look at it closely, and you will see fragments of a gigantic head, an arm and shoulder, and a foot. Once this mass of ruin was the great granite statue of Ramses II., and was a single block of red granite, weighing nearly 1,000 tons.

You remember how I told you of the Memnon colossi weighing 700 tons and measuring 20 feet across the shoulders. It seems big enough, but Ramses was bigger still, though not quite so tall, as he sat there, and he was nearly 300 tons heavier. He measured $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet across the shoulders, his ear was $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and a child could curl up quite comfortably and go to sleep in the hollow of it ; the nail on his middle finger is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and the breadth of his foot across the toes is $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet. He, too, like his brother Pharaoh out on the plain, must have taken a pretty large size in sandals. All the labour of hewing that monstrous block of granite—the hugest ever handled by

human hands—to satisfy the conceit of one man! You can see plenty other evidences of the vanity of King Ramses in his temple. Here, for instance, is another picture of his everlasting battle of Kadesh. I suppose nobody ever dared to suggest to His Majesty that if he had been brave in getting himself out of the muddle there, he had been the biggest of fools in getting into it, and might have been glad to have the whole business forgotten.

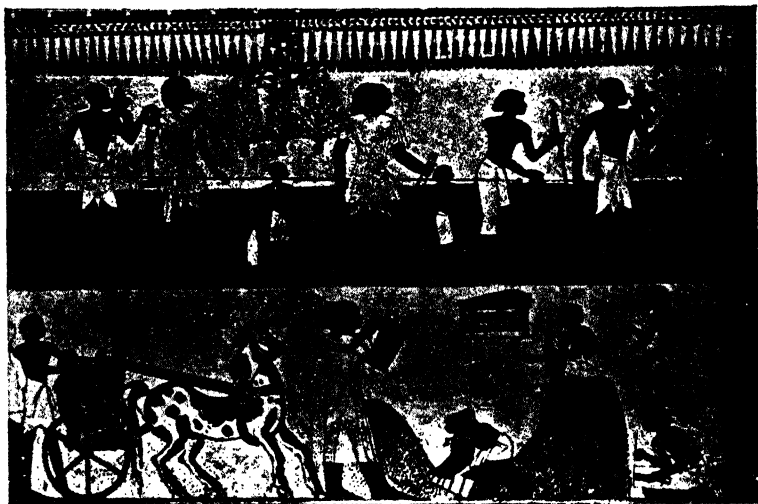
But we have seen temples enough, and are not going to pause at any of the others, even though Queen Hatshepsut's beautiful terraces shine brightly and invitingly against the red cliffs of Der el-Bahri. We are going to look at a single tomb of an Egyptian noble among the scores that lie around. Of course we shall only see the painted chambers of the tomb-chapel, for the actual tomb itself has long since been robbed. Look round you at this gaily-painted little hall. You thought, didn't you, that the old Egyptians, who seemed to be always thinking about death and the tomb, must be a dreadfully gloomy sort of folk, of whom you are rather glad to think that they are all safely out of the world now—the kind of folk whom you imagine always going about with long faces, and frowning sourly on every kind of enjoyment? Well, look round you again. Not much sign of gloomy thoughts here, is there? Even though this is a tomb, the whole place is full of brightness and the joy of life. Here is Nakht sitting at table with his wife, and enjoying a good square meal, while beneath the table a hungry cat is eating a fish with tremendous delight. I am sure that the artist who painted the scene had a good laugh at it when he was done, for you cannot help laughing at the eagerness of the cat even now.

Here, again, are Nakht's servants ploughing, sowing, reaping, winnowing, and measuring the grain, and gathering in and pressing the grapes, while their master sits under his veranda or stands, leaning on his tall staff, and watches how things are getting on. Here, again, is a feast in Nakht's house. The guests are dressed in their best white linen, and each one has a little cone of scented ointment on his or her head, which will melt as the evening goes on and keep the guest sweetly scented (and greasy). Do you remember the old Psalm: "Like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments." I daresay you have sometimes thought what a nasty greasy mess it must have made. Well, here you see how the thing was done. The Egyptians, like the other Easterners, liked the perfume, and didn't mind the grease. Here are the waiting-maids, very lightly clad indeed, handing things to the guests—sometimes wine,

sometimes flowers to sniff ; and here is a blind harper playing and singing to them, just like the Last Minstrel in Sir Walter Scott's *Lay*, while in another part of the room three girl-musicians are busy playing on a harp, a guitar, and a double-pipe.

What becomes of your idea of a gloomy people now ? The people who loved the joy of life so well that they had such pictures as these painted on the very walls of their tombs must have been the very opposite of gloomy—one of the cheeriest, jolliest, and kindest sets of folk, I think, who ever lived. Don't think that Nakht is the only one to have his tomb painted with pictures of this sort. Go into any one of the painted tombs you like, and you will see the same sort of things. Here is a picture from Menna's tomb. It is harvest, and among the reapers you will see two little girls who have been gleaning, as Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz at Bethlehem. One of them has got a thorn in her foot, and she is holding it out to her companion to pull the thorn out. In the next row of pictures the two girls have quarrelled, and are fighting, and one of them is lustily pulling the other's hair. Not so very different from ourselves, were they, after all, this gloomy people ? They liked to think that they would have the same bright, cheery, active kind of life around them even in that new world of the west to which they were all going, as they had loved so much when they lived over in Thebes ; and we may be glad that they left us these bright pictures, not only because they teach us not to misjudge a kindly, happy race of men and women, but because without them we should not know a tenth part of what we do know about the kind of life they used to live in those far-off days.

But now we must leave the hill-slopes where we have been walking among the tomb-chapels, and wander round across the front of the causeway from Hatshepsut's temple to the north-east end of the great bay of the Libyan hills. Here we notice a bare rocky ravine coming down from among the hills. A road winds along it, between walls of forbidding cliffs, and, following it for a while, we soon come out into a strange rugged valley, which makes a great amphitheatre, surrounded on every side by high cliffs, and commanded by a lofty peak which the Arabs call the Horn. It is just about as barren and desolate a place as you will find anywhere in the world. " There was not a blade of grass nor a trace of scrub in this deserted valley. The sun beat down on its lifeless rocks all through the morning, and in the afternoon it lay in deep shadow, utterly silent except for the sighing of the wind and the occasional cry of a jackal. Although shut off from the Necropolis and the Nile valley by no more than a single wall of cliffs,



PICTURES OF FARM WORK FROM THE WALL OF A THEBAN TOMB.

it seemed to be infinitely remote and unearthly—a sterile, echoing region like a hollow in the hills of the Underworld.”

This dreary valley, on whose iron rocks and dusty road the sun shines down like a ball of fire out of a brazen vault, has some claims to be considered the most famous valley in the whole world, as for some centuries it must have been the richest. For this is the *Biban el Moluk*, the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, where the greatest Pharaohs of Egypt were buried, with all their splendours around them, during all the centuries when Thebes was the capital of the empire. At the present day over sixty tombs are known in the Valley, but of course these are not all royal tombs, for sometimes a Pharaoh would grant, as a special favour to a favourite courtier or a near relative, the privilege of being buried in the Valley of the Kings to some one who might not even be of royal or noble blood. When the glory passed away from Thebes, and the City of the Dead ceased to be patrolled night and day by armed guards, the tombs of the kings gradually fell into ruin; they had mostly been robbed, however, long before that. In Greek and Roman times some of them were still known—one geographer mentions forty in his day—and tourists used to come to see them. Just like tourists to-day, horrible to relate, they used to scrawl their undistinguished

names and their opinions of the show on the sculptured walls. Here is the scribble of a donkey from Alexandria, who took a good deal of pains to write himself down an ass. "I, Philastrios the Alexandrian, who have come to Thebes, and who have seen with my eyes the work of these tombs of astounding horror, have spent a delightful day!" The Roman official Januarius came here with his daughter Januarina. "I saw and marvelled," he says. "Farewell, all of you," he adds cheerily, for the benefit of the spirits of the great dead. These wide doorways, sometimes with a short path with sloping walls leading into them, belong to some of the more famous among the royal tombs, though there are others which are much less imposing and better concealed.

Now what was it that led the Pharaohs of the empire to make their tombs away in this most desolate of all spots? Well, you remember how the Pharaohs of early days tried to secure that nobody should ever disturb their rest, by piling up mountains of stone over the chambers in which their coffins lay, and so leaving the pyramids to be the wonder of the world. Before very long, however, they found out that pyramids were no good as a protection against robbery. The bigger the pyramid the more people thought that there must be something well worth stealing beneath it; and before the pyramid-builders had been more than a century or two in their tombs, the pyramids were broken into, their treasures stolen, and their bodies scattered about the desert dust. Then came a new idea—not to make the pyramid so big, but to hide its entrance away out in the desert, a long distance from the actual burial-place, and to make the passages which led to the burial-chamber so difficult to trace out that the robbers would give up the job in despair. That did not work either, and the Pharaohs of Abraham's time had their tombs robbed just as surely as the others; for the Egyptians, with all their good qualities, have been for thousands of years, as they are still, the most incorrigible and the most skilful of tomb-robbers. "It is as natural," says one who knows them well, "for them to scratch in the sand for antiquities as it is for us to pick flowers by the roadside."

So at last the Pharaohs of the empire very unwillingly came to the conclusion that it was no use to have a fine tomb, with a fine temple beside it to advertise to all the thieves in Egypt that here was something worth stealing. They would have to separate the tomb from the tomb-temple. Then they would be able to make the temple as fine as they liked. As for the tomb, they would hide it away in a desolate place where nobody would think of looking for it, and they

would make it look as plain as possible outside, though inside it might be as gorgeous as sculpture, painting, and gold-work could make it. It was only very reluctantly that they came to the conclusion that this would have to be done, for each Pharaoh liked to have his temple as close as possible to his tomb, so that his spirit would have only a step or two to go when he wanted to be present at the services held in his memory, to sniff the flowers, and hear the hymns of praise. Now the spirit would have to walk down that long rocky valley and away round a mile or two, perhaps more, to the tomb-temple, if he wished to share in the gifts that his friends and subjects brought for him.

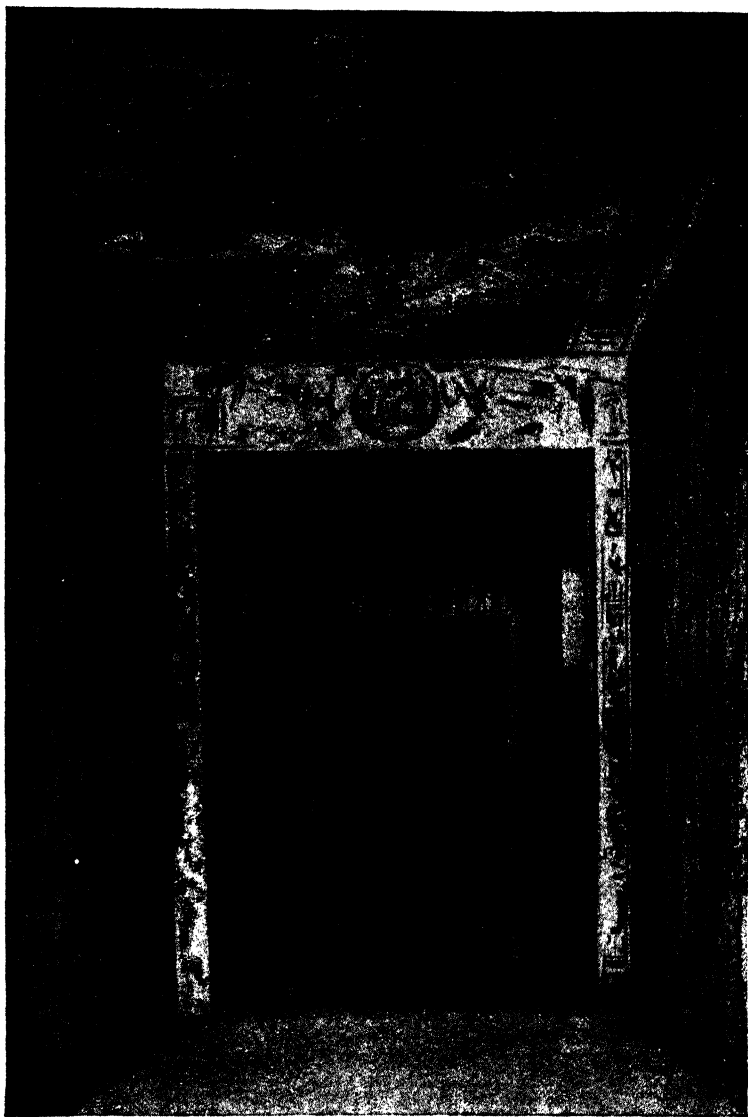
But necessity knows no law, and at last the thing positively had to be done. The first king actually to make his tomb in the Valley was King Thothmes I., the father of Queen Hatshepsut, and the first conqueror of Syria. He put the job into the hands of his clever architect, Ineni, who had set up his two obelisks for him already, and Ineni tells us about the doing of it. "I superintended the excavation of the cliff-tomb of His Majesty alone," he says, "no one seeing, no one hearing." How did he manage such a thing—he, a soft-handed Egyptian upper official, with a task which involved the hewing of many tons of rock? Well, prisoners of war were plentiful in the days of Thothmes and Ineni, and it was easy to close their mouths when the work was done. Do you remember how Captain Flint, in *Treasure Island*, kept the six sailors who hid his treasure from babbling? "Him and the six was alone here; he killed them every one. Six they were . . . and bones is what they are now." Ineni appears such a nice kind man in his story of his own life, that one is sorry to suggest such a thing about him. But life was of very little account, especially the life of a prisoner, in those days, Pharaoh's secret was of supreme importance, and "dead men tell no tales." Some day, perhaps, we shall find out if it actually was so. Meanwhile, all we have to go upon is Ineni's own word. "I did it," he says, "no one seeing, no one hearing," and we know that he could not have done it without at least a score of workmen to help him. How was it done, and what became of the workmen, if the secret was to be kept?

What was a royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings like, then, however it may have been made? Let us go to the finest and most beautiful of them all, though it is not the biggest. This is the tomb of Seti I., whom we know already as one of the best of Egyptian Pharaohs. It was found more than a century ago, on October 17, 1817, by one of the most famous, and certainly by far the most amusing of the early excavators in Egypt, the Italian Belzoni, who had tried almost every

part in life, from that of a professional strong man in England to that of a hydraulic engineer, and who brought to England some of the very finest and most beautiful things that ever came out of Egypt, as the result of his excavations. By the close of the day on which he struck the entrance to the tomb, he had got so far into the corridors as to be sure that he had found a real treasure. Ere long his progress was interrupted by a great pit, 30 feet deep, which yawned across his path; but once he had bridged it he found no further obstacle, and he spent the next three weeks like a man in a dream, wandering from one corridor to another, and from chamber to chamber, trying vainly to record the wonders which he saw. We shall follow him for a little, and see what he first saw after it had been hidden from mortal eyes for thirty centuries.

A steep flight of steps brings us down to the entrance, which is hewn out of the rock, like all the galleries of the tomb. We go down the first corridor. On either side of us the walls are decorated with sculptured and painted reliefs. Here is the king adoring the hawk-headed god Harakhte, and here is part of the ritual of the praising of the sun-god, illustrated, while the ceiling is covered with flying vultures. Another staircase leads us down into a second corridor, whose walls are adorned with thirty-seven forms of the sun-god, and with figures of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys. Then comes an antechamber, with pictures of the king adoring various gods, and we enter a large pillared hall, which bears on its walls a series of pictures representing the journey of the sun-god in his bark through the dark realms of the underworld. From this hall a short flight of steps leads down to another pillared hall, where the story of the sun-god's journey is continued. Returning to the first hall, we find a flight of steps in the corner of it, which leads us through two corridors to another antechamber, where the king is seen once more, being received by a number of gods of the dead. From this room we enter another pillared hall, still larger than the former two, and with part of its roof hewn out into the shape of a vault. Here once stood the lovely alabaster sarcophagus of Seti which Belzoni brought back with him to England, and which is now in the Soane Museum in London. Here again the pictures on the walls show us the continuation of the journey of the sun, whose boat is being towed along through the darkness, while all sorts of spirits of the underworld greet its approach.

From this great hall we branch off into several annexes, all, save one, decorated with similar scenes, and arrive at last at the fourteenth chamber of the tomb, which is undecorated. We have come 328 feet



ENTRANCE PASSAGE OF A ROYAL TOMB (RAMSES IX.), VALLEY OF THE
KINGS, THEBES.

in a direct line from the entrance and the light of day, and a good deal more if account is taken of all the turns and twists of the passages. When you think that nearly every part of this great succession of galleries and halls is sculptured and painted with scenes of the utmost delicacy, some of them of wonderful beauty, you realize that this tomb of Seti I. is one of the great wonders of Egypt, not less remarkable than some of the famous temples. Little wonder that Belzoni thought himself in a kind of weird Fairyland, for the scenes on the walls, though they have somewhat suffered since, were then as bright and gay in colour as if they had been painted only a few days before, and they are often so strange and uncanny as to suggest queer ideas about wizardry and black magic. In point of fact, they did not mean anything dreadful. You will have noticed that, instead of being pictures of the ordinary life of Egypt, as in the other tombs I told you of, they mostly picture the sun's journey through the underworld. They are accompanied, too, by descriptions of the journey, taken from some of the religious books of the time; and the idea of the whole was to secure for the dead king a safe passage through this same dark underworld, in company with the sun-god.

Such, then, is a royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings. I have chosen the finest of them all, and some of them, like the tomb of Tutankhamen, are very poor and rough things compared with this magnificent underground palace of Seti I. Some of them, again, are much larger than Seti's, though none is so fine in its decoration. The tomb of Queen Hatshepsut, for instance, is more than twice as long as that of Seti—700 feet from end to end—but it is neither sculptured nor painted. But all of them, greater or smaller, consist of an entrance passage and inner chambers, fewer or more numerous as the case may be.

Of course, what we see in the Valley is only a part of the royal tomb arrangement. You remember that each pyramid had its temple crouching at its eastern side, so that services might be held to and for the spirit of the dead king? Just so each royal tomb in the Valley had its temple away out on the western plain, where we saw them all, or the ruins of them, as we came up to the Valley. There was no room for the temples in the narrow Valley, and, besides, their presence there would have proclaimed just what the kings were anxious to keep secret—the place where each tomb lay. So the Pharaohs of the great days of the empire were laid away in their deep, rock-hewn caves, with the most wondrous treasures of all sorts piled up around them; and the services were held in the temples, far away in the



MODEL OF A WOMAN GRINDING CORN.

Models like this, and the Brewer who follows, were placed in Egyptian tombs of Abraham's time to work for the dead man in the underworld.

brilliant sunlight of the western plain, where the poor spirit of the dead king had to travel quite a weary distance to be present. It was a nuisance, but the trouble was worth the while, if only security was gained.

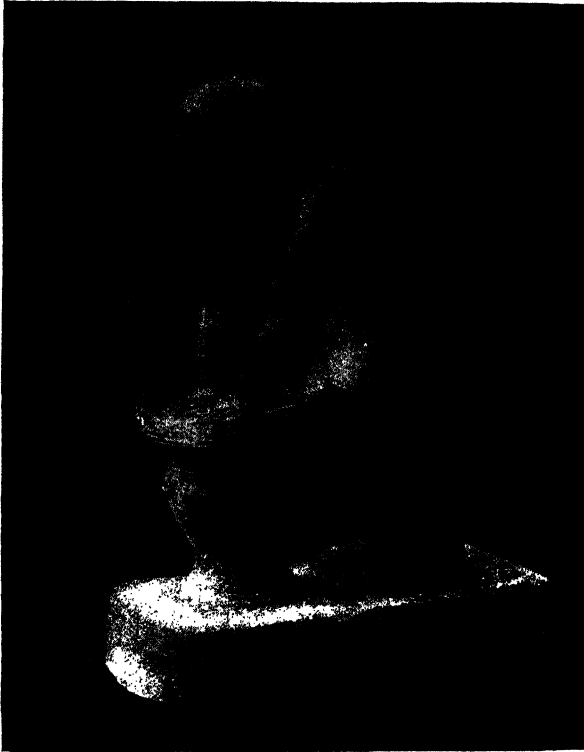
Unfortunately it wasn't. I suppose that there have never been cleverer or more determined thieves in the world than the Egyptian tomb-robbers of those ancient days ; and if Pharaoh was set on having secrecy and security, they were just as set on preventing him from having either. Of course, it was quite impossible to keep the thing so secret that it would never get out. Many people had to know where the tomb was—the architect, and the skilled workmen whom he needed, and who couldn't be killed off when the work was done, whatever you might do with the slaves who did the hewing—the priests who performed the services at the mouth of the tomb, and so on. Quite a lot of folk knew all about it, and had seen the precious things going into the tomb when the king was laid to rest ; and they were all

Oriental, who has never seen very much wrong in taking a bribe. Sooner or later some one of the lot would be got at by a gang of thieves, and would allow them to oil his palm until he thought it was worth his while. Then he would lead the gang of rascals in the dead of night to the place where the tomb lay, and they would set to work.

You can imagine what a breathlessly exciting business it was, and what hard work they had cutting through rock and rubbish, climbing down into the deep pits that were purposely left across the corridors to defeat thieves and to catch water. Think of them, working like miners away down in the depths of the earth, with all a miner's dangers, and, on the top of them all, the danger of being caught red—or black—handed. If they were caught, you may be sure that death was the least of what they would suffer; and you can fancy how the man whom they set to watch for the guards strained his ears for the very slightest sound of approaching feet. But I suppose they had mostly managed to square all the folks who were likely to give trouble, before they began their work. Very often it was the priests themselves, who were appointed expressly to look after the tombs, who sold their trust, and the guards of the Necropolis were not by any means all clean-handed in the business either.

Fortunately for us, though I suppose the thieves thought it very unfortunately for them, the whole black business came out in the reign of Ramses IX., somewhere about 1130 years B.C. You remember I told you that there were two mayors of Thebes—one, Prince of Thebes itself, the Thebes of the Living; the other, Prince of the West, the Thebes of the Dead. Now, like a good many mayors of rival and neighbouring towns, these two mayors of the two cities hated one another like poison. In the time of Ramses IX. the mayor of Thebes was called Paser, and the mayor of the Western City was called Pewero; and these two big men had a first-class and highly satisfactory quarrel permanently on hand with one another. Everybody knew, of course, that things were not as they should be in the City of the Dead, and that robberies were constantly going on, but it was very difficult to get proof of it.

Somehow or other Paser, the mayor of Thebes, had managed to lay hands on a batch of thieves who had been concerned in robbing the tomb of a king who reigned 600 years before this time. How he got hold of them we don't know—very likely it was over something quite different. Anyhow, having got them, he questioned them in the usual gentle manner of the East by beating them much and often, and they confessed to having robbed some of the royal tombs. Paser



BREWING FOR THE EGYPTIAN HEAVEN.

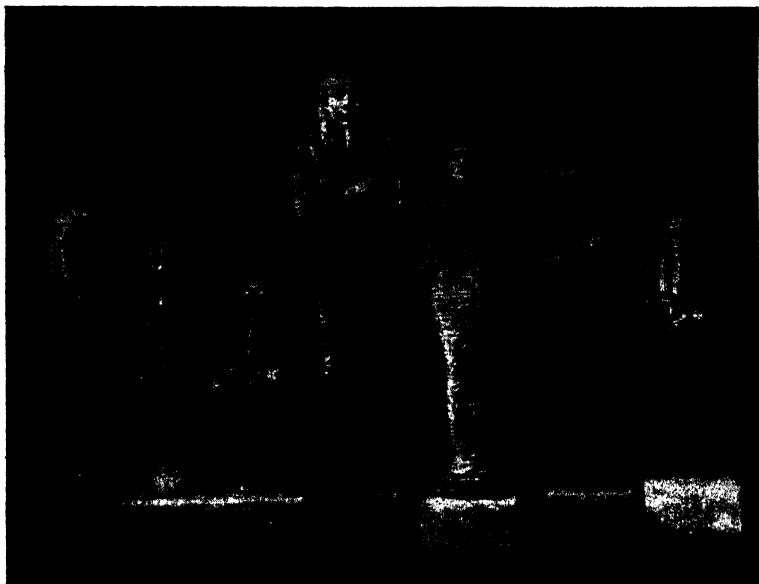
was delighted. Now he would make that puppy Pewero, the mayor of the Western City, wish he had never been born. So he laid the whole business before the Prime Minister, and no doubt thought that Pewero was as good as done for. But "for ways that are dark, and for tricks that are vain" the Oriental official has always been peculiar, and Mayor Pewero was just about as slippery a rascal as there was in all Egypt. A royal commission was appointed to look into the business, but Pewero so managed that it appeared as if the commission had been appointed at his request and not on that of his rival Paser; and he managed to have the evidence produced doctored so that it appeared as if Paser had shamefully exaggerated the whole affair. Paser

managed to get some fresh evidence, but this, too, was sugared so that nothing came of it ; and, to crown all, the police of the Western City, into whose hands Paser's original eight witnesses had been entrusted, managed to let them escape, very conveniently for their chief Pewero. Paser completely lost his temper over all this dodging, and spoke wild words about appealing direct to Pharaoh, and the commission promptly reprimanded him, and it looked as if the poor mayor of Thebes, who seems really to have been an honest man, had completely lost his case, and his smug and slippery enemy of the west had triumphed.

A year passed, and then the fates gave Paser his turn. The thieves who had escaped were captured again, and it turned out that Paser had been right after all. Two years later more evidence came to light, and finally, in six weeks, forty-five thieves were laid by the heels, and poor misused Paser's charges were proved up to the hilt. Some of them confessed (after due application of the stick) that they had robbed the tomb of the great Pharaoh Amenhotep III., the most magnificent of all the Pharaohs ; and so I suppose we shall never really know how splendid a Pharaoh's burial might be, for poor little Tutankhamen's splendour would only be a trifle compared with that of the Golden Emperor. The original eight rascals told how they robbed poor King Sebekemsaf and his wife, Queen Nubkhas, and for sheer cold-bloodedness it would be hard to beat the way in which they treated the bodies of those whom they were supposed to honour as gods.

" We found the august mummy of this king. . . . We stripped off the gold which we found on the august mummy of this god, and its amulets and ornaments which were at its throat, and the coverings wherein it rested. We found the king's wife likewise ; we stripped off all that we found on her likewise. We set fire to their coverings. We stole their furniture, which we found with them, being vases of gold, silver, and bronze. . . ." And so on. That is how the Egyptians of 3,000 years ago treated the tombs of their kings. When you hear any one saying that it is a shame that men of science should dig up these old tombs and preserve, ever so reverently, their wonderful tomb-furniture, you can ask them if they would prefer to see the digging up of the tombs done by thieves who would handle the dead kings as these scoundrels handled poor King Sebekemsaf and Queen Nubkhas. For that is really the only alternative. The modern fellah will treat his ancient kings just as the ancient fellah treated them when they came into his hands ; and when he does, all the beauty and wonder of the treasures which he finds will be lost to the world for ever.

I suppose that the exposure of the thieves and their helpers may



Later the Egyptians ceased putting model workers into the graves, and substituted "ushabtis" or "answerers," these little figures who "answered" for the dead man, and did his work for him. (Photo, Sir Flinders Petrie.)

have improved things in the City of the Dead for a while. One hopes, at least, that Pewero, the slippery rascal, got what he deserved, though one is not very sure about that. However, the improvement, if there ever was one, did not last very long. Soon things were worse than ever. The honest men among the priests (I suppose there were some) were absolutely frantic with terror over the impossibility of securing the tombs from violation. In despair they took counsel with one another, and decided that it was no use trying to guard the royal mummies so long as they were scattered in scores of tombs all over the Valley. While they were watching tombs at one place, the thieves might be breaking into half a dozen other places, and it would take an army to watch them all. Even if they had an army, who could be sure that some of the very soldiers would not take to looting the treasures they were set to defend? The only solution of the problem was to clear out the royal tombs, and gather the mummies, as secretly as possible, into a single tomb, where a watch could more easily be kept.

You can understand what a heart-break it must have been to the honest men among the priests to do such a thing, and to destroy all the glories which had been created with such infinite pains. However, it was done at last, and the Pharaohs were huddled away in an undistinguished tomb, whose secret, they fondly hoped, might be safely kept. They had under-estimated the cunning and persistence of the Theban thieves, however. Soon the wolves were on the track again, and the poor priests, getting more and more frantic with terror as they realized how hopeless it was to conceal their trust from the robbers, hustled the poor bodies of the mighty kings of Ancient Egypt from one place to another, vainly hoping that this time, at least, the secret would be kept. At last they stored the most of them in the unfinished tomb of Queen Astemkheb, not far from Hatshepsut's temple at Der el-Bahri. Then came war and destruction. Thebes fell before the conquering Assyrians—never to rise again. The glory had departed, and the later Pharaohs made their palaces and their tombs away in the north. The priests and their enemies died out, and the secret of the hiding-place was forgotten.

And then in July 1881 Emil Brugsch of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, which had learned the secret from a modern Theban thief by ways much the same as those which had forced the confessions from the thieves of 1100 B.C., was lowered by one of the thieves down a 40-foot shaft, from the foot of which he found his way for 220 feet along a dark gallery packed with funerary furniture, into a chamber where he found himself face to face with a multitude of dead royalties, among them some of the greatest and most renowned of Egyptian Pharaohs—Thothmes III., Seti I., Ramses II., and others who had been among the mightiest of the mighty in their day. They were taken to Cairo, where the faces of some of the most famous, such as Seti and Ramses, were familiar until almost yesterday. Now they are wisely kept once more from public view, and are no longer left for careless crowds to gape at or deride.

Seventeen years later came the discovery of another batch of Pharaohs, when M. Loret entered the tomb of Amenhotep II., and found that famous fighter lying in his coffin under the blue, gold-starred roof of the burial-chamber, with several other mighty monarchs keeping him company. Poor Akhenaten's desecrated body was found in 1907; and then, in 1922, the whole world gasped with astonishment when the wonders of Tutankhamen's tomb came to light.

And now there is just one line of ancient Theban Pharaohs whose resting-places have never been found. These are the kings of the

Twenty-first Dynasty, who reigned at Thebes from 1090 to 945 B.C., just about the time when the Hebrew kingship was being established. It was the daughter of one of these priest-kings whom Solomon married, and for whom he built his splendid palace. Some day, perhaps, some fortunate explorer will light upon the entrance to an underground passage which will lead him into a corridor from which the burial chambers of these kings will branch off, each an Aladdin's chamber filled with as precious stores as filled Tutankhamen's tomb. For it is suspected that they may have adopted another mode of burial, and have been laid to rest in a single great underground series of vaults, with but one inconspicuous entrance. But all this is only a perhaps, and we may have to wait long enough before we learn what became of Solomon's father-in-law and his brother Pharaohs.

So we leave the desolate Valley, its burning rocks seamed with the gaping pits of black shadow which once were the "Eternal habitations" of great kings. The only sound that breaks the stillness of this quarter of Thebes of the Dead is the throbbing of the engine which supplies the electric light to the tombs which are kept as show-places for the annual crowd of tourists. One wonders what the Pharaohs would have thought of that strange and uncouth requiem.

CHAPTER XXXII

NEW TENANTS IN PALESTINE

DURING all this time, while we have been watching the struggles and the ups and downs of Egypt and its empire, what has been becoming of the little country that was the bridge by which Egypt's army passed up and down on its errands of conquest or defence? Somehow for us Palestine is so deeply connected with the Hebrews and their eventful story that it rather comes as a shock to our minds to realize how late they came into their Promised Land, and how short a time they held it. "Late," that is, of course, in the history of the Near East, where a century or two is just as "yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," and "a short time" compared with kingdoms and empires that lasted for millenniums, instead of for a few hundred years. The story of Ancient Egypt, for instance, begins almost 4,000 years before Christ, and only ends with the Persian victory at the battle of Pelusium, which closed the existence of the wonderful old kingdom, which was now absorbed into the great Persian Empire. That was in 525 B.C.; but even after that, when Alexander the Great had conquered the Persians and taken over Egypt along with the rest of the empire, his general, Ptolemy, revived the glories of the land of the Nile, and the Ptolemaic kings made the country strong and splendid again. So that you may say that Ancient Egypt lasted as a kingdom almost for 4,000 years.

Over against that you set the little kingdom of the Hebrews in Palestine. How small was the time in which they had anything to do with the land, and how much smaller still the time during which they had anything like a kingdom in it. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob come and go across its hills for a few years from about 2000 B.C. onwards; then Jacob goes down with his sons into Egypt, and Palestine knows no more about them, except for a funeral or two, for centuries. Then, perhaps about 1380 B.C., we get a glimpse for a little of some strange new-comers who are appearing in Palestine and making trouble for the Egyptian residents and the vassal chiefs. They may be the Hebrews, or they may not—we are not exactly sure about that as

yet. After that, for a while there seems to have been a time, say about 1200 B.C. and onwards, when Palestine was gradually becoming a perfect witch's cauldron, in which tribes and young nations struggled and bobbed up and down for many years, as the last strong hand of an Egyptian Pharaoh lost its grasp, and Ramses III. sank into his grave. Then, at last, only about 1000 B.C., what you can really call a Hebrew kingdom in Palestine begins to appear, first feebly under King Saul, then more and more strongly under David and Solomon, and thrives for a little time, say fifty years or so—the time to which the Hebrews always looked back as their golden age.

Then the little kingdom splits into two portions, and though the northern part is much the stronger, it is also much the nearer to danger, and by 721 B.C. its capital, Samaria, falls before the great Assyrian conqueror Sargon. The southern part lasts for some time longer, always in terror of being devoured either by Assyria or by Egypt ; but at last, when it finally goes to wreck in 586 B.C., Assyria has passed away itself, and the conqueror is Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. That was the end of Hebrew ownership in Palestine, for though the exiles came back again with Ezra and Nehemiah, they never owned the land again, but were only tenants, living on the sufferance first of the Persians, then of the Macedonian Greeks, and last of all of the Romans.

The whole time that the Hebrew kingdom in Palestine really lasted was from 1000 B.C. to 586 B.C., just about 414 years altogether—not much more than a tenth part of the time during which the mighty kingdom of Egypt grew and flourished and died down, and just about a fifth part of the time during which Babylon was a great kingdom. So you see that if there has been little to say about Palestine and the Hebrews so far, it is because they had not yet come into their kingdom at all ; and if there will not be very much to tell about them after they have won the Promised Land, it is because, after all, their kingdom was only a tiny little corner of the great world of ancient days, their struggle only a little skirmish scarcely noticeable in the dust and din of the great conflicts of the empires, and their whole duration, from first to last, only a fraction of the time which our story has to cover. It is true that, from one point of view, that tiny kingdom and those trifling struggles have come in the end to mean more for the world than all the noise and clatter of the great empires ; but that is another story, and belongs to the history of religion, which is far too big a thing for us to enter upon here. Our story of the Ancient East must tell things as they happened, and must try to keep the proportions of the story right ; and when you look at that old world apart from the

history of the Hebrew's relation to his God, Palestine and its tenants are just a passing incident among far greater things.

So now that we have tried to get things into their proper proportion, let us look for a little at what has been happening in Palestine during these years when the Egyptian Empire was climbing up the hill towards the summit of its glory, and beginning to slip down again on the other side towards the sunset. For a while yet it is still Egypt that comes most into the picture, though you begin to meet with rough Hittites, with their heavy coats, their peaked hats, and their boots with upturned toes, with wild tribesmen from the deserts, who may have been the first of the invading Hebrews (or may not), and with great hordes of travelling nations, who devour the whole land wherever they go, and who will leave behind them, when they are driven back, some folk who are going to be a sore thorn in the flesh to the Hebrews when they do arrive in the Land of Promise. In spite of all these, Egypt still holds Palestine in a strong grip, and has her fortresses dotted up and down over the land.

You may remember that I told you in the sad story of how Akhenaten, the Prince of Peace, lost his provinces and broke his heart, how the Hittites and the Amorites were helping one another to steal away Syria from Egypt. While that was going on in the north, something very like it was going on also in southern Palestine; only there it was those wild wandering tribesmen whom I mentioned a moment ago, the Habiru as they called themselves, who were working the mischief. There is a vassal king in Jerusalem now, a descendant, perhaps, of Melchizedek, whom we saw blessing Abraham; and he is a priest, just as Melchizedek was, though he is a priest of a goddess, not of a god. Abdi-khiba is his name, and it means "Servant of the Goddess Khiba." Poor Abdi-khiba writes very doleful letters indeed to his master Akhenaten at Tell el-Amarna. Enemies, he says, are all around him. The merchants' caravans are being robbed only fourteen miles away from Jerusalem, and he has not troops enough to guard them; even the caravans of Pharaoh himself are not safe. Again and again the worried, anxious man writes: "The whole land of the King, my Lord, is going to ruin." Sometimes he is not content with writing to the king, but adds a postscript to the scribe who translated the letters, to tell him to be sure to impress the matter on his master. "To the scribe of the King, my Lord, thus speaks thy servant, Abdi-khiba: 'Bring clearly before the King, my Lord, these words, All the lands of the King, my Lord, are going to ruin.'" At last things grow so desperate that Abdi-khiba felt he must save himself

before it was too late—unless, of course, the Pharaoh would send an army to put things right. “If there are no troops this year,” he writes, “let the King send an officer to fetch me and my brothers, that we may die with my Lord, the King.” But, as you know, troops were the last thing that Akhenaten thought of sending to the provinces; and one imagines poor Abdi-khiba holding on desperately till the last moment, and then escaping for his life from his hawk’s nest on the cliffs of “Urusalim,” or perhaps waiting just a little too long, and being overwhelmed when the wave of invaders sweeps over his little stronghold.

Then for a time you hear no more of what is happening in Palestine, until the Egyptians begin to pluck up heart again. And then you see the armies of Seti I. and Ramses II. marching up the old war-road along the coast-plain of Palestine, and sending off brigades up the valleys to seize the strongholds and hold them for Egypt, before they march up into the Lebanon to meet the Hittite armies. Let us take a look for a moment at one of these fortresses that the Pharaohs set up to tighten their grip upon the land. You have all heard of Beth-shan, the place where the Philistines hung the dead body of Saul after the fatal battle of Mount Gilboa, and where they offered his armour as a trophy in the temple of their gods—one of the saddest stories of Israel’s history; but perhaps you never troubled to ask what the Philistines, whose home in Palestine was away down south on the seashore, were doing far up in the north at Beth-shan, and who first brought them there. For Beth-shan is away at the eastern end of the Plain of Esdraelon, where the roads come up from the other side and the eastern desert across the fords of the Jordan.

Well, it was the fighting Pharaohs, in their struggle to regain Palestine, who brought them there. When Seti I. was marching up through Palestine, he noticed this fine commanding place for a stronghold, which Thothmes III. had held long before, just on the edge of the slope looking down to the Jordan fords. If Egypt held that spot, then she could command the main road from the east to the Nile valley, and nobody could come or go without her leave. So he set to work and built a strong fort overlooking the slope, and made it his headquarters, while he conquered the country round about it. Then came his son, Ramses II., and he added to the fort as he was busy conquering Galilee; and last of all, another famous fighting Pharaoh, Ramses III., about whom I shall have to tell you directly, completed the strong place. Now the native Egyptian soldiers did not care much for living in garrison in a foreign country like Palestine. They loved

their own land too well, with its great river and its rich harvests and abundant flowers, and they didn't think much of poor little Palestine with its bare hills. So the Pharaohs, when they had got their fortress built, put in a garrison of foreign mercenaries to hold it for Egypt, and the men whom they chose were mainly our old friends the Philistines.

It would take too long to tell you how there came to be Philistines ready to take service with the Egyptian army. In a word, it was because the great sea-empire of Crete, where the kings of the house of Minos had ruled for so long, had fallen not long before, and all its colonies around the eastern Mediterranean had been broken up. So the whole Levant was full of what our forefathers used to call "broken men," wandering about by land or sea, looking for new homes and new masters; and the Philistines were one of these tribes of masterless men, who were ready to take service with the first king who would pay them. Well worth paying they were, too, for they had learned many things from Crete, and were far better equipped than most of the races of the East, and were fine fighters as well. So the Pharaohs put in their Philistine garrison in the citadel of Beth-shan, and built temples for their war-god, Resheph, and their goddess, Ashtoreth, so that the soldiers might feel at home, and laid out a fine cemetery where those who died might be buried. Then they passed on to fight at Kadesh and elsewhere, as we saw Ramses II. fighting; and the Philistines settled down and grew quite at home at Beth-shan. And all this has only come to light the other day, when an American expedition began to dig in the great mound which covers the old Egyptian and Philistine fortress, and found the old walls that the Pharaohs built, and the temples where the Philistine garrison used to worship.

What the Hebrews were doing, if they were already in the land, nobody knows; but we do know that a great change was just going to come about which would make it far easier for them to conquer the country when they did come in. For, as I told you, the break-up of the Cretan kingdom set the whole Levant in a ferment. "The isles were restless, disturbed among themselves," as a famous Egyptian inscription says, and gradually a great multitude of these masterless Sea-peoples drew together and determined to find a new home for themselves. They swept eastwards and southwards over Asia Minor, blotting out, as they went, the Hittite Empire; they set up a huge fortified camp in northern Syria; then they poured south through Palestine, meaning to invade Egypt, and make their new home in

the fertile Nile valley. Many of them had very likely served in the Egyptian army already, and knew how fine a country Egypt was. It was not an army that was on the march against Egypt, but a nation, or rather half a dozen nations, with women and children travelling in carts behind the fighting men, and a great fleet coasting along in sight of the land army. Among them were Philistines, Greeks, Cretans, Phoenicians—a motley host of all kinds of people.

They swept down through Palestine, and everything went down before them, as you can imagine. The little tribes of Palestine could not look them for a moment in the face, and very likely joined in with them to avoid being slaughtered. "They came with fire prepared before them, forward towards Egypt," says the Egyptian story of the raid. "Their hearts were confident, full of their plans." But Egypt, though she was no longer the great power that she had been under a soldier like Thothmes III., had found a great man to lead her—the last of her soldier-Pharaohs, Ramses III. He gathered a big fleet in the Nile mouths, and a great army at the Isthmus of Suez, and marched northwards to meet the enemy, his fleet keeping pace with his army, just as the fleet of the Sea-peoples was doing. Somewhere on the sea-coast of Palestine the two fleets and the two armies clashed together, and there was a tremendous double battle. No doubt the Sea-peoples were fine fighters, but the Egyptians were better disciplined, and had a great general to command them, and discipline and skill won in the end. Ramses himself has told us of his victory. "Those who reached my frontier, their heart and their soul is perished for ever. As for those who had assembled on the sea, the full flame was in their faces, and a wall of metal upon the shore surrounded them. They were dragged, capsized, and laid low upon the beach; slain and made heaps from stem to stern of their ships, and all their belongings were cast upon the waters."

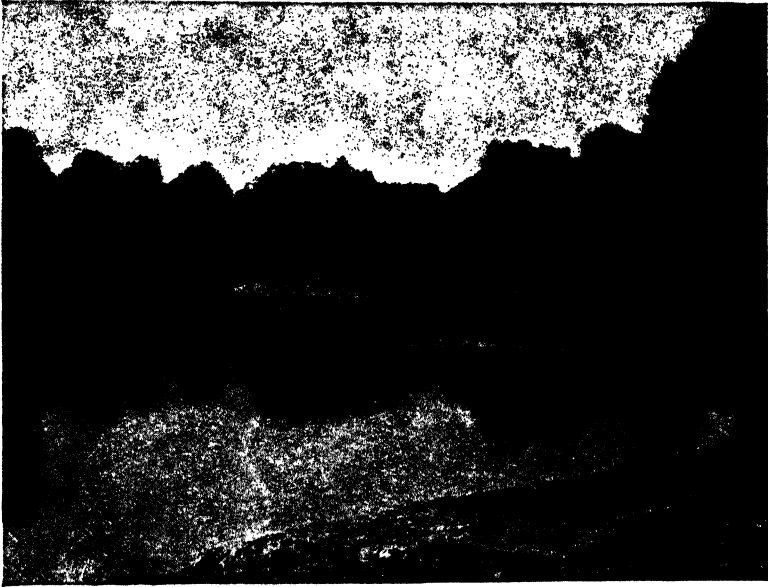
After their defeat the Sea-peoples retreated northwards, and I daresay that the Philistine garrison in Beth-shan would take a shot at their defeated fellow-countrymen as they straggled dejectedly past, and would jeer at the men who imagined that they could conquer Egypt. But some of the sea-folk did not go very far. Ramses died, and when once his strong hand no longer held the sceptre, Egypt went rapidly downhill. Soon she could no longer keep her hold on Palestine, and now the fragments of the great invasion came creeping back again into the land, the Philistines first of all. They wandered down the coast-plain till they came down to southern Palestine, and there (for they did not forget that they had once been sea-folk) they founded

five cities not far from the sea—Gath, Gaza, Askalon, Ashdod, and Ekron. The Hebrews were to hear of those five cities, and of Bethshan, with its Philistine garrison up north, before they were much older as a nation.

So now you can see how things stood. The great raid of the Sea-peoples had simply smashed up whatever unity there had ever been in Palestine—there was never very much. The old Egyptian overlordship was dying of mere decay. There was nobody to bar the way for long to any new-comers, except this little Philistine league which was finding its feet down on the sea-coast. It was the ideal moment, and the most splendid chance for anybody who wished to gain a new home. Perhaps the Hebrew tribes had been trying it before ; that, as I told you, is not certain, but at all events they had now the chance of ages offered to them to walk into the land which they had so long hoped for, with no one to say them Nay to any purpose. And, whether they had been in the land before or not, now was the time when they began to make themselves more and more the masters of it as the years went on.

The time when they were gradually squeezing themselves in, and squeezing other folk out, was a miserable time for everybody. At first, when Joshua was leading them and they held together as one nation, they got on not so badly. They were only a little body of folk, it is true, but they were united, and the smashed-up tribes of Palestine, who were their only opponents, were not able to look a united nation, even if it were only a small one, in the face. But soon Joshua, who had led them so wisely and so well, died, and after a while the men whom he had taught died also ; the tribes were scattered, each to its own chosen bit of country, and there was nobody to call them together as one nation when there was danger. So the enemies whom they had conquered so easily before began to pluck up heart again ; and other invaders came into the land, and found the Hebrews scattered and disunited, and beat them again and again, and made slaves of them. Now it would be the Moabites from the other side of the Dead Sea who held them down ; now the King of Hazor, whose iron chariots they could not face in the field (note those iron chariots, for iron is beginning to come in, and the nations like the Hebrews, who have only bronze, are going to have a bad time of it, until they get iron weapons like their opponents) ; now it would be an Arab raid—Midianites, the Hebrews called them ; and, worst of all, the Philistines were beginning to think that they were strong enough to claim the whole land, instead of their little strip of coast-plain.

Now and again some champion would rise up among the scattered



"IN GREEN PASTURES AND BESIDE STILL WATERS:" SHEPHERDS IN PALESTINE TAKING THEIR SHEEP ACROSS THE JORDAN.

and down-trodden Hebrews, and would strike a blow that gave freedom to part of the land for a while. Ehud would murder the Moabite king—a nasty treacherous bit of work, though it freed the Hebrews for a time. Deborah and Barak would scatter Jabin's chariots by a headlong rush from the hills, as the heavy cars were struggling through the mud of the overflowing Kishon. Gideon would lead a wild night rush on the Arab camp, and sweep the Arabs away in panic flight. Even the Philistines, with their iron weapons and their bronze corselets, would find Samson too hard for them, till they had caught him by guile. But altogether this time, when the Hebrews had got into Palestine but had not been moulded into a united nation, must have been a most wretched time for everybody. You read about it in the Book of Judges, and there are fine brave stories of the Hebrew heroes there ; but I don't think that any of us would have liked to live in that miserable time of confusion when, as the Bible tells us, "There was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was

right in his own eyes." What was right in his eyes was generally wrong in the eyes of his neighbour, and so strife and killing went on continually, and Palestine, which could once put its hundreds of inlaid bronze chariots in line of battle against Thothmes III. at Megiddo, was going back fast to barbarism.

The Hebrew tribes—who had some kind of civilization when they came out of Egypt with Moses, as you can see from the way in which they made their Tabernacle in the wilderness—were fast losing all the civilization they had ever had. More than that, they were not getting a firmer hold of their Promised Land than they had at first under Joshua's leading, but were being pushed up into the hills and crowded into corners. And while they had managed, once in a while, to drive out the Arabs or the Moabites when they became too troublesome, there were always those terrible fighters the Philistines, who refused to be driven out, and who gradually were in a good way to drive out the Hebrews instead.

There were not very many of them, it is true—only the League of Five Cities, with an outlying fortress in the north at Beth-shan, where the descendants of the old Philistine garrison of Ramses still held the ancient citadel, and had long since made friends with their fellow-countrymen down south. But then they were armed in a way that made the very bravest of the Hebrews think twice before he would step out from the ranks to meet a Philistine champion in single combat. Read the description of Goliath's armour in the seventeenth chapter of 1 Samuel, and you will see how terrible they seemed to the half-armed Hebrews. Worst of all, the Philistines had cornered the supply of the new metal—iron—which was doing such wonders on the battle-fields of the ancient world. They held the coast, so that iron could not come in to the Hebrews by sea; they held the caravan route at Beth-shan, so that it could not come down from Asia Minor or the east. All that could be got through had to be smuggled, and that was only enough to provide weapons for one or two of the foremost champions of Israel. What could the poor Hebrews do against folk who held such an advantage as that over them?

How bitterly it pressed upon them you can read in the story of the brave fight which poor King Saul and his gallant son Jonathan put up against their better-equipped enemies. I daresay you may have wondered, when you read the story of Saul in 1 Samuel, how it came about that there was no smith in the land of Israel to make weapons for the Hebrews, as the story tells you. "Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said,

Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears. . . . So it came to pass, in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people, but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found." It was just that the Philistines kept all the iron for themselves. They allowed the Hebrews a few files to sharpen their farming tools, but for anything more—No ! And so, when you read how Goliath swaggered about in front of the Hebrew army for forty days on end, and found no one bold enough to fight with him man to man, you needn't think that it was because the Hebrews were cowards. It was because they knew that they had no more chance against him, with their poor clubs and bronze-tipped spears, than you would have with a bow and arrow against a man with a magazine rifle or a Lewis gun. They were ready enough to rush on in a mass, and trust to luck to get in a sound blow with club or spear in the mêlée, but it took too much nerve to stand up single-handed against the bronze-clad and iron-armed champion of Philistia.

By-and-by David found a cure for that too, and Goliath got the surprise of his life, and was no doubt very much disgusted when David did not fight fair, but threw stones at him from a distance. But even then, one victory did not end the trouble. Saul could not afford to have his land cut in two as it was cut by the Philistine garrison at Beth-shan. So he gathered his army, not very hopefully, poor man, and marched up north to besiege the old citadel of Seti and Ramses. The Philistines could no more suffer him to take it from them than he could afford to let them keep it, and so they, too, marched north with all their strength to raise the siege. And that is how Saul's last battle with the Philistines came to be fought on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, far away from the king's native Benjamin and the Philistines' native Philistia, and how Jonathan, as David says in his beautiful lament for his friend, "was slain on the high places."

Every one knows the sad story. How Saul fell by suicide rather than perish by a Philistine sword ; how his body was hung on the wall of Beth-shan, and his armour in the old temple of Ashtoreth that the Pharaohs had built for their foreign garrison to worship in ; and how the men of Jabesh-gilead, whom Saul had saved in his day of power, rescued his body from shame, and honourably burned it. And now you can see the very wall from which the body of the dead king of Israel was hung, and the very shrine, with its curious clay flower-stands, where his bloodstained armour was offered to Ashtoreth.

It was not to be for long that the Philistines were to glory over their triumph. David took up the task that had been too hard for

Saul, and when his turn to triumph came, he did not forget Beth-shan and what had happened there. We know how he stormed Jerusalem, which was cutting his kingdom in two in the south. We have no similar story to tell us how he stormed the Philistine stronghold in the north. But we do not need it, for the ruins of the old fortress themselves bear witness to the thoroughness with which he avenged the death of the first king of Israel. "The sack of the citadel," says Dr. Fisher, who has been excavating Beth-shan, "was thorough. Everywhere the mud-brick walls were baked red in the terrific heat; especially in the northern portion, where the oils and grain in the store-rooms supplied abundant fuel for the flames. Here the bricks from the falling walls and the beams from the roof had filled corridors and rooms to a depth of over three feet with a mass of *débris* burned as hard as rock and as difficult to remove."

So, with the red flare of the sack of the great fortress of Israel's bitterest foes, the old Palestine of the Conquest and the Judges passes away for ever, and we are left with the kingdom of Israel, and its soldier-king established upon his throne, ruling a kingdom which in those days, when the great empires were for the moment too weak to dispute the sway of Syria with him, stretched, for a few years, far up into the Lebanon and away to the edge of Naharina, where the Pharaohs once conquered and hunted. Then comes Israel's short day of splendour when she, like Egypt, had her Golden Emperor in the person of King Solomon; though, of course, Solomon in all his glory was but a tenth-rate king compared to the magnificent Amenhotep III.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

THE early kings of the Hebrews, Saul and David, had lived in a very simple and hardy manner, for they had neither the wealth to spend on magnificence, like the great kings of the old empires, nor had they the time and the chance to be splendid, even if they had possessed the wealth. The business of their lives was fighting to keep life in themselves and the young nation which they led. Once David had fairly got a united nation behind him, however, and had beaten the Philistines and all the rest of his foes round about, and had captured Jerusalem and made it his capital, he began, to some small extent, to set up a royal establishment such as other kings had ; and along with that, he found, came trouble. Nine troubles out of every ten in the palaces of the kings of the Ancient East came out of the harem, where the various wives of the kings quarrelled with one another, and made up plots to get their sons acknowledged as heirs to the throne. Well, David's harem, when he got big and rich enough to set one up, was no better than those of his neighbours. I think he was far happier as a shepherd on the hills of Bethlehem, or even leading his handful of outlaws in the wilderness, than he ever was in his palace on Mount Zion. All the latter days of his life were made bitter by the jealousies and hatreds of his own household, and even when the old warrior lay on his deathbed he had to rouse himself and give orders to his captains and counsellors to defeat a plot which one of his sons was making to grasp the sceptre himself. David, of course, easily outwitted the feeble plans of Adonijah, and saw Solomon safely seated on the throne before he died, but it must have been a bitter thing for the old king to know that his own sons were conspiring against him.

Once Solomon got things entirely into his own hands he showed very soon that he meant to be as magnificent a king as any of his neighbours. David's conquests were now beginning to bring in a regular revenue in the shape of tribute, so that the young king had plenty of money in his hands ; and what did not come in as tribute, he raised by taxing his subjects in Palestine. One of the first things

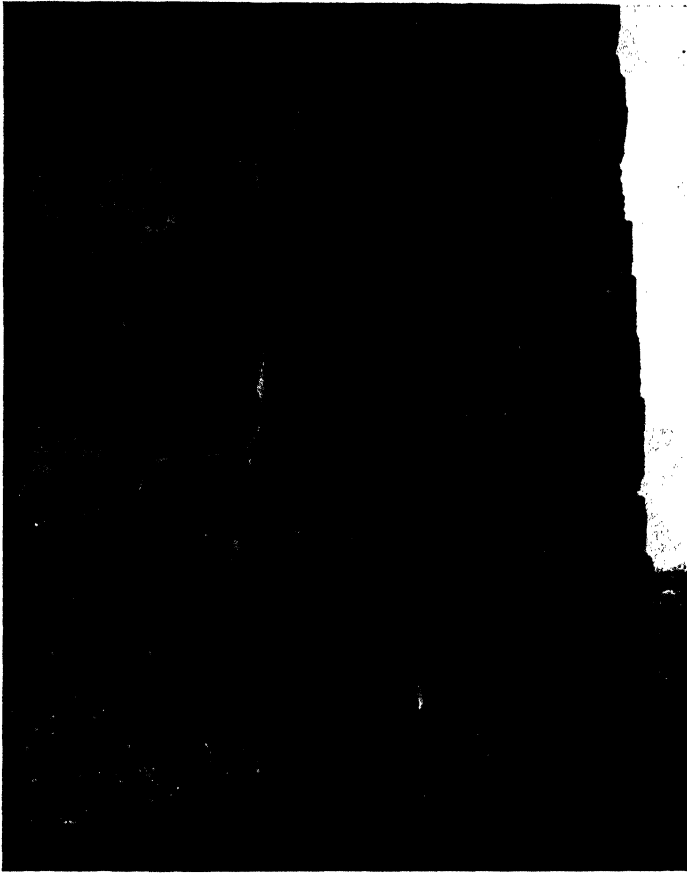
which he did was to look about him for a wife, and he set his thoughts very high indeed, for he aspired to marry no less great a lady than the daughter of the reigning Pharaoh of Egypt. It is true, of course, that Egypt had been going downhill now for a long time, and the glory of the Pharaohs was no longer what it once was ; but all the same it was a great thing for Solomon, whose father had kept a few sheep in the wilderness, to think of wedding an Egyptian princess. Which Pharaoh it was whose daughter he married, we do not exactly know, but it must have been a daughter either of Siamon or Pasebkhanu, the priest-kings of Thebes, or else of Sheshonk, the Libyan Pharaoh who afterwards invaded Palestine in the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The Bible tells us of that invasion, calling Sheshonk Shishak ; and Sheshonk himself has left us the story of it carved in stone on the walls of the temple at Karnak.

No matter who was the Pharaoh in question, his daughter had to be treated with all the honour that could be given to so great a lady, condescending to live in a little country like Palestine, and a tiny capital like Jerusalem. I wonder what the Egyptian princess thought when she first set eyes on the little fortress perched on the hills of Judah, where her life was now to be lived ? With all the glories of her own Thebes in her memory, she must have felt that she had made a poor exchange. For Jerusalem in David's time was scarcely much more than the little hawk's nest which sheltered Melchizedek in Abraham's day, and poor bewildered Abdi-khiba six centuries later. When his warriors, led by Joab, swarmed up the shaft (the " gutter " as our Bibles call it) which allowed the people of the town to draw up the water of the Virgin's Fountain, and so won the place for Israel, David made a few additions to it, but not many. He built a citadel, and a house, not very big, but made of stone and cedar, for himself ; and near his own house he built a guardhouse for his " mighty men " or bodyguard, and that was pretty much all. No doubt the town grew fast, once it was made the capital of the country, and we may imagine a lot of houses scattered in the suburbs outside the wall of the old fortress on Ophel ; but the main part of the capital was still huddled close together within the walls on the spur of the east hill below the present Temple area, and there was nothing where the Mosque of Omar now stands but the bare threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, with the altar which David had raised on it standing there to mark the place out as the site of the future temple.

So, when Solomon brought his Egyptian princess up to her future home, you may be sure that it was with many apologies for offering



THE STORMING OF JERUSALEM: JOAB'S FORLORN HOPE
IN THE WATER-SHAFT



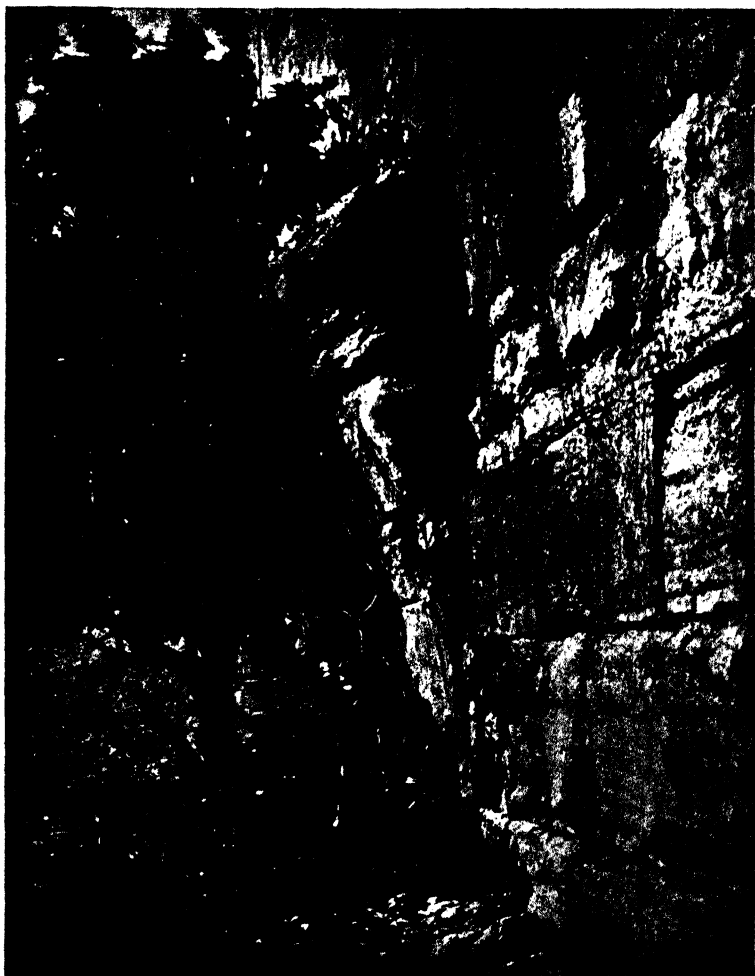
" MASTER, SEE WHAT MANNER OF STONES AND WHAT BUILDINGS ! "
SOME OF SOLOMON'S WORK AT JERUSALEM.

her so poor a lodging, and many promises that before long she should have a home worthy of her rank and her former state. The writer of the First Book of Kings tells you as much, or at least you can read it between the lines. " And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the walls of Jerusalem round about."

The princess had to wait quite a while, however, before she was lodged as her husband wished her to be ; for his palace took thirteen years to build, though no doubt part of it was ready for living in long before that. Anyhow, you see, King Solomon soon found out that if you wish to live with the great ones of the earth you must be prepared to dip your hand pretty deeply into your purse ; and though I daresay he liked spending money quite well, for he had splendid and expensive tastes, his people, who had never heard of such things, and who had to pay the bills, thought quite differently. For a while they were very proud of all the magnificence, and liked to see the walls of the Temple rising and flashing with gold in the sunshine, and even liked (not quite so well) to see how fine the king's house was going to be ; but by-and-by they tired of the continual taxes that were needed to pay for Solomon's glory, and still more of the forced labour which they had to give on his everlasting buildings.

Let us do King Solomon justice, however. His first thought was not of his own palace (perhaps he had not married the Egyptian princess yet), but of the House of God. His father had gathered together a great mass of all kinds of material, iron and bronze and cedar wood from Lebanon, together with a considerable amount of gold and silver, so that Solomon could get a start made at once. Of course the Hebrews had never had any experience of what it meant to build so great a structure, and the memory of the great buildings that their forefathers had helped to rear in Egypt was only a memory that could not help them in the work that lay before them. So Solomon had now to look about for a foreign architect who should help him with the design of the Temple and of its furnishings. When he had gone down to Egypt for a wife, one would think that he might have gone there also for an architect, and if he had he would have got a far more imposing building than he did. But he was keen to have as much cedar wood in the building as he could get, and so he made a bargain with Hiram, King of Tyre, to supply him with timber, and when he was about it he got an architect from Tyre as well. And so the Temple was built from Phœnician designs, and that meant that, while it was very gorgeous, it was by no means so stately and dignified a building as it would have been had he gone to the master-builders of Egypt for his plan.

Hiram, the architect, however, did his best, and certainly the Temple, when it was finished after seven years' hard work, must have been very magnificent to look upon. What it was like, as a building, it is quite impossible to tell from the descriptions which are given to



"ROBINSON'S ARCH."

Built by Herod in place of Solomon's bridge over the Tyropæon Valley.

us in Kings and Chronicles, and the one thing that is quite certain about all the attempts that have been made to reconstruct it is that, whatever the Temple may have looked like, it did not look like that. One thing that we are sure of is that it followed something like the arrangement of the Tabernacle, and had an outer court, a holy place, and a holy of holies ; while the measurements that are given suggest a building that to our minds would have looked rather stumpy and clumsy, and far too high in proportion to its length. But, after all, we know too little about it, since the Temple has absolutely vanished from the face of the earth, to be able to judge of its beauties or its faults. Certainly it was as fine as the hands that built it could make it, and as gorgeous with gold and bronze as Solomon could afford to have it. As it stood there on the site of Araunah's threshing-floor, towering above the little city to the south of it, and flashing with white stone and gold, the Hebrews must have felt that there was surely nothing else in all the world to be compared with the House which their wise king had built for them to their God. One curious thing about it was that no iron tool was allowed to be used in the building of it. You remember that iron was just coming in for tools and weapons (mainly for weapons) in Saul's time, and I fancy that the reason for not using it for the tools which built the Temple was that it was *tabu* because it was used almost entirely for warlike purposes. David himself was forbidden to build the Temple because he had been a warrior all his days, and very likely the iron which was used so much for swords and spears was forbidden for the same reason.

So at last the Temple was finished, and when it was ready to be dedicated there was a great gathering of all the nation to Jerusalem. The priests brought up the ancient Ark of the Covenant, with the two Tables of the Law, and all the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle, and they were borne into their new resting-place in the splendid Temple with blare of trumpets and clash of cymbals. Then the king offered the new House of the Lord to the God of his fathers in a beautiful prayer, one of the noblest things in the historical books of the Bible, and vast sacrifices were offered on the altar of burnt-offering, so that the smoke of the offerings went up continually from the Temple hill for seven days on end. Then the great ceremony closed with a solemn feast on the eighth day, and the king "sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness which the Lord had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. Thus Solomon finished the House of the Lord."

Meanwhile his Egyptian queen was waiting, rather impatiently perhaps, for the palace that her husband had promised to build her. Now that the Temple was finished he was able to begin with his new house ; and if he made the House of God magnificent, he made his own house more splendid still, for while the Temple took seven years to build, his own palace took nearly twice as long, and was not finished for thirteen years. When it was all finished at last, it must have offered a sight which would have made Melchizedek and Abdi-khiba rub their eyes if they could have come back to "Urusalim" again, and wonder at the change which had come over their old eyrie. For the whole set of buildings piled up, stage after stage of gorgeousness, each more splendid than the last, on the rock summit of the hill behind the old city of David, until the crown of all was reached with the Temple itself, which occupied the highest point of the hill.

First of all came a great public hall inside a walled court. Its roof, and probably its pillars, were made of cedar wood from Lebanon, whence it got its name, "The House of the Forest of Lebanon ;" and here were hung the 300 shields of beaten gold which the king's body-guard carried on occasions of great public processions. Beyond this cedar hall rose a stately flight of steps, which led into a pillared hall which was the anteroom to the throne-room. Out of the pillared hall, those who were to get a state reception from King Solomon were led into the throne-room, at one end of which stood the famous throne of ivory overlaid with gold, and with a row of six golden lions on either side of its six steps. Higher still than the throne-room came the king's house, with a special wing which the Egyptian queen had all to herself, and which was called the House-for-the-Daughter-of-Pharaoh. Each of these great buildings stood in a spacious walled court of its own. Highest of all, towering above the whole city, rose the Temple.

You can understand what an impression a pile of magnificent buildings like this, set off as it was by a site which rose stage by stage as if created specially to exhibit their splendour, would make on a simple race of farmers and shepherds, such as the Hebrews were at this time. "Solomon in all his glory" became a sort of byword with them for anything that was magnificent beyond human imagination. The tradition of all the grandeur of the Wise King's works was handed down from age to age, and from race to race, until at last it became the universal belief that Solomon was the mightiest of all magicians, who had control of all the jinns and efrits of the invisible world, and could make them all do his bidding. Even to-day King Solomon's

seal, with its interlaced triangles, is the most famous of the so-called magical signs in which silly people believe.

Houses so magnificent as that of Solomon have to have all things in proportion to their own splendour, and so the king's whole equipment was as gorgeous as if he had the world at his command, instead of a little third-rate kingdom like Israel. "All Solomon's drinking-vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon." Not so very long before, as time goes in the East, silver had been more valuable than gold; but now times were changed, and a mighty man like Solomon thought nothing of the commoner metal. "The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars (which had all to be brought down from Lebanon with great labour) made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance." A very lordly gentleman indeed!

Of course all this magnificence could not be kept up without something coming in to meet the expense of it. Money was being poured out like water; well, then, something must be done to bring money in. Solomon had a plan for that too. The Hebrews have never been great sailors or fond of the sea. In fact, they have always hated it, and if you read about it in the Bible it is generally to find it described as something evil, or something to which evil people can be compared. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest." But now, for the first time in their lives, and very nearly for the last time (not quite), they were obliged to make sailors of themselves to meet their great king's need. Like a wise man, King Solomon did not trust his land-loving Hebrews to go to sea alone; he got King Hiram of Tyre to lend a hand, and sent out his ships along with the Tyrian fleet. I daresay the unskilful Hebrew sailors made a dreadful botch of it, and were very seasick at first, but by-and-by they got more used to it, and kept up a regular trade in the Mediterranean.

At least the Bible tells us that they traded to Tharshish, which has generally been believed to be in Spain; but the things which they brought home with them sound more as if they had been trading down the Red Sea and thence to India. "For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish, with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks." The peacocks, at all events, sound more like Far Eastern trade than anything else, though the other things might be got elsewhere, perhaps in North Africa. So I fancy that possibly "the navy of Tharshish" does not mean the navy that traded to

Tarshish in Spain, but just the navy of big sea-going ships, and that King Solomon's fleet sailed from Ezion-geber, on the Gulf of Akaba, at the head of the eastmost branch of the Red Sea, to bring home the gold that the king needed so much of, and the peacocks which would look so fine on the terraces of his new palace. So once in every three years the ships came home, and the caravans would take up the precious cargoes, and bring them up the long Wady el Arabah, along the shore of the Dead Sea, and so up the steep road from Jericho to Jerusalem, with armed guards tramping beside them all the weary way.

As time went on, the fame of the wonderful things which King Solomon was doing in Palestine, and the great city he was making out of little Jerusalem, began to spread abroad, as such things do, in the most marvellous manner, in the East. Everything that he had done grew a little more wonderful every time it was told, until at last people began to come, as our Lord says, "from the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon." There are all sorts of curious stories about these visitors in search of wisdom, and some of the most curious are told about the visit of the Queen of Sheba, about which the Bible also tells us. Mohammed, in the Koran, has a most astonishing yarn about the Queen of Sheba, whom the Arabs call Balkis. When the Wise King was gathering together his army of birds, he says, the hoopoe did not make an appearance. So Solomon said: "How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Is she absent? Verily, I will punish her with a severe punishment, or will put her to death, unless she brings me an excuse." When the hoopoe finally arrived, she told a long story about a wonderful country ruled over by a queen who possessed a splendid throne. Then Solomon sent a letter by the hoopoe to the queen, bidding her submit herself to him, lest worse should come upon her. When she did not come, but only sent gifts, Solomon sent a dreadful jinn, who lifted up her throne and brought it to Jerusalem in the twinkling of an eye. Then the queen was convinced, and came for herself to see the wisdom of Solomon, and became a worshipper of the true God.

The Arabs have no end of tales of the cunning questions which she put to the king to prove his wisdom—how she sent 500 boys dressed as girls, and 500 girls dressed as boys, each bearing a golden brick, along with other gifts, and how she invited Solomon to find out which were the boys and which the girls; how she gave him an undrilled pearl, and an onyx drilled with a crooked hole, and asked the king to pierce the pearl and thread the onyx. Solomon, of course, merely commanded one worm to bore the pearl, and another to creep through

the crooked hole in the onyx bearing a thread with it, and the thing was done. And everybody knows how the Abyssinians to-day still hold that they are descended from the Queen of Sheba, who learned the true faith from the great king. But all these are only stories, with more imagination than truth in them; and even as stories, there is none so beautiful and so dignified as the simple narrative in 1 Kings, which tells how "she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart." We shall all remember how the queen acknowledged that all the stories she had heard were far less than the reality, and that "the half was not told her," and with what a stately blessing she left the Wise King, long after we have forgotten all the foolish legends with which later times have disfigured the simple and noble tale.

All these things show the bright side of King Solomon's greatness; but there was another side to it which was not by any means so bright. These splendid buildings and gorgeous guards, with their golden shields, cost money—a very great deal of money; and Israel, after all, even as David had left it, was a small and poor country. Where was the money to come from, and to keep on coming, after David's hoard was exhausted? Of course there was that navy, trading to the Far East; but a navy that only comes once in three years, and then only brings luxury cargoes such as ivory and apes and peacocks, even if some gold comes along with the rest, is not going to build up much national prosperity. You want more useful cargoes, and more of them, to do that.

So, after a while, the keeping up of all this magnificence began to weigh very heavily upon the Hebrews, who had once been so innocently proud of their splendid king. They began to realize that you can't marry Pharaoh's daughter, and try to keep upsides with your big relations, and entertain half the princes and ambassadors of the East, without somebody having to pay the bill; and that somebody was, as he has nearly always been, the humble individual who worked his little farm and kept his handful of sheep, away up in far-off Zebulun or Naphtali, in the north, or in Gad or Reuben beyond Jordan. It was all very well for the "home counties," so to speak—Judah and Benjamin—which lay round about Jerusalem. David and his house were their own, and besides they got some value for their money. They saw all the fine shows, and a good deal of the money that went to keep up that gay court would be spent among them, so that stock-

breeders, and sheep-farmers, and dairy folk would get some return for their taxes. But the men of the outlying tribes got none of that. The splendours of the court were not for them, save on an occasional visit to Jerusalem; they were too far off to share in the cash that went for supplies to the palace; all they saw of Solomon's glories was the tax-gatherer coming always oftener, and always with a bigger bill, and the foreman of the forced-labour gang coming more and more frequently to carry off the young men for the building work at the distant capital, where they would only get a bare keep and no wages.

Little wonder that, as the years dragged on, and there seemed to be no end to Solomon's extravagance, the men of the outlying tribes began to grumble. But Solomon was much too lofty a man, and too much taken up with his own high-and-mightiness to listen to such paltry things as the grumbles of a few peasants, if they ever reached him. By-and-by the grumblers found a leader—a leader in the most dangerous place too, for he was head of one of the forced-labour gangs. At last something did come to Solomon's ears that made him wake up, for he heard that one of God's prophets had told this master of works (Jeroboam was his name) that he was to be king of the greater part of Israel as soon as Solomon was dead. But instead of realizing that the best way to cure all this discontent was to cut down expenses and relieve the people of their heavy burdens, all that he did was to try to kill Jeroboam, who fled down into Egypt and stirred up the king's father-in-law to think how much fine plunder he might get out of Palestine, now that Solomon had gathered so much wealth together there.

And so the Wise King's wisdom seemed to desert him at the end, and the last part of his wonderful reign saw gloomy clouds gathering on every side of the horizon; nor was it long after his death when the storm burst. It came as one might have expected. A burdened people, justly begging, though through a self-seeking spokesman, to be relieved of some of their burdens; the new king, Rehoboam, a young fool who had been brought up in that luxurious court to think that all the world was just a toy for him to play with, and that his subjects might be thankful if he left them their lives; a set of young idiots like himself, the typical products of an Eastern palace, to scoff at the hard-handed farmers and shepherds, with their rough sheepskin cloaks, who pressed the demand; and the mischief was done.

"My father made your yoke heavy," said the crowned fool, "and I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Little wonder that when that

answer of supreme folly fell upon their ears, and they realized what it meant of misery and oppression, the cry went up from the waiting crowd : " What portion have we in David ? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse : to your tents, O Israel : now see to thine own house, David." The brief glory of the united kingdom of Israel was done for ever ; the kingdom had paid too dearly for her wise and magnificent king. It was not going to stand a second edition of Solomon in all his glory.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF A GOD'S MESSENGER

SOMEWHERE about the year 1115 B.C., just when the dreary time of the Judges of Israel was drawing to a close, perhaps when Eli was priest and judge, and Samuel was a boy in the old man's house, there happened a set of adventures along the coast of Palestine and Syria, which give us the most vivid picture that we possess—apart from that of the Bible—of the kind of life that was being lived in those days. One of its chief merits is that it gives us quite a different picture from the Bible one, for, instead of showing us the inland tribes, with their constant wars and squabbles, it draws the curtain aside from the old life of the coast towns, and lets us see the great business princes of the Phœnician race living in their prosperous cities as quietly as though there were no wars and rumours of wars among the restless tribes behind them, posting up their ledgers, and counting their profits, as the ships came in, just as a business firm might do to-day in Liverpool or Glasgow. Inland, the Hebrews were fighting for their very lives, and men went about to their daily work with swords at their sides and spears handy, because they never knew when an enemy might swoop down upon them from the north, or across the fords of the Jordan; but down on the coast the canny Phœnician watched his harbour mouth, and counted the cedar logs that were to go off by the next fleet to Tanis—his only anxiety the Zakru pirates, who looked in now and again to get their payment for letting his ships go unrobbed. You would scarcely think that you were living in the same world as that of the Book of Judges when you read the story of the adventures of Wenamon.

One evening in the year 1891 a handful of fellahin from the village of El-Hibeh, in Upper Egypt, were grubbing around in the sand for stuff to make their evening fire with. While they were doing so, they uncovered a ragged roll of papyrus, seemingly very old. Nowadays the fellahin understand, just as well as any European (and mostly a good deal better) the value of "antikas"; and so, instead of feeding the fire with the ancient roll, they sold it to a dealer in antiquities,

who sold it in his turn to a Russian scholar. When M. Golenischeff came to translate the writing of the roll, he found that he had got a treasure indeed, for it was the story of Wenamon, a priest of the great god Amen of Thebes, and it told what had happened to him on the Syrian coast when he went there to get cedar wood for the barge of the god at Thebes.

At the time when Wenamon was sent on the journey of which this old papyrus gives the report, things were pretty miserable in Egypt. The country had got split up into two halves, and while Ramses XI. was nominally king in Thebes, the real ruler there was the high priest Herhor, who shortly afterwards made himself king in name as well as in reality. The Theban rulers, however, only governed the southern half of Egypt. All the north was governed by a prince of the Delta, called Nesubanebbed, who lived at Tanis with his wife, the Princess Tentamen. Up at Thebes the priests still tried to keep up the old splendour of the days when gold was as dust in Egypt, and when Amen had five times as much wealth as any other god in the kingdom ; but they were finding it harder and harder to do so, for the gold no longer came in as it used to do in the brave days of old, when Pharaoh used to go out pretty well every year with his army to present the bill for the taxes.

Perhaps you may remember what I told you about the size of some of the old Egyptian ships—how one of Seneferu's big galleys, away at the beginning of Egyptian history, was 42 feet longer than the great *Sovereign of the Seas*, which was built at Woolwich in the days of King Charles I., and only 16 feet shorter than the length along the gun-deck of Nelson's *Victory*. Well, the god Amen had to have his great galley in which he went out for a sail on the Nile on great feast-days ; and *Userhet*, the barge of Amen, was a very wonderful ship indeed. Eighty years before the time of our story King Ramses III. had built a magnificent new *Userhet* for Amen to sail in, and he has told us how big she was. She was 224 feet long—38 feet longer than the *Victory*—and she was gilded and decorated most gorgeously. No doubt so splendid a galley was kept very carefully ; but even cedar wood will wear out at last, and by the time of Ramses XI. the old ship was getting pretty well done, and had to be replaced. It was no easy business to raise the money that was needed to buy the cedar wood for the new ship ; but at last, what with subscriptions from some of the great nobles, and something out of the treasury of the god, the priests scraped together as much as they thought would do.

In the happy old days, the envoy who went to buy cedar for the

barge of the god went as a prince, with a small fleet of ships to carry him and the goods which bought the wood ; but times were changed, and every penny was needed for bargaining over the timber itself. So the priests chose out a worthy member of their own company, Wenamon, whose rank was "Eldest of the Hall of the House of Amen," gave him a secretary to accompany him, and a bag with £2,800 in gold and silver in it, and sent him down to Tanis in the Delta, there to get passports and credentials from King Nesubanebded, and to pick up a passage in a trading ship sailing to Syria. Wenamon duly sailed down the Nile to Tanis, and presented his letter from the priests to Nesubanebded and Tentamen. The Delta king and queen were quite agreeable, and said : " I will do, I will do according to what Amen-Ra, King of Gods, our Lord, saith ! " Nesubanebded had no ships of his own sailing at the time, but there was a Syrian ship loading cargo for the Phœnician coast, and Wenamon and his secretary got a passage in her, and became quite good friends with her skipper Mengebet.

Fifteen days after leaving Thebes they cast off from the quay at Tanis, and as Wenamon puts it, " descended into the great Syrian Sea." They were scarcely out at sea when their troubles began, for poor Wenamon suddenly realized that he had left behind him at Tanis his letters of introduction which he ought to have presented to the Phœnician princes with whom he would have to deal ! You can imagine his feelings when he found out that he would have to face the princes with nothing but his own story to show that he was not a fraud. By-and-by, too, I suppose he would have other troubles to make him feel that even the loss of his credentials was a small matter. The Egyptians used to call the Mediterranean " the Very Green," but I fancy that Wenamon was soon very much greener, for the Egyptians, as a rule, are extremely bad sailors, and no doubt the poor priest was very sick before long. I fancy I see him and his secretary, two very unhappy men, sitting gloomily in the stuffy little cabin of that old Syrian coaster, counting over that precious £2,800 (when they were not too ill to count), to make sure that none of it had gone astray ; and I think I can see a rascal sailor of the Syrian crew watching them through a crack in the door, and making up his mind that he will have his fingers in that bag of gold and silver before many days are past.

Behind all his other troubles, poor Wenamon had one which was heavier than any ; but as he hasn't told us of it yet, I cannot tell you either. We shall hear about it in due course. Meanwhile you can

picture the little ship rolling and pitching along the bare coast of Palestine, until at last the bold headland of Mount Carmel begins to lift on the horizon far ahead, and she puts about and makes for the harbour of Dor, a little distance south of the famous cape.

At Dor there was a little colony of the people whom the Egyptians called Thekel, and we would possibly call Sicilians, who had got left behind when the great wave of the Sea-peoples broke and rolled backwards. Their prince, Bedel, was very civil as soon as he heard who was on board the ship. He asked no awkward questions about the missing letter of credit, but sent on board at once a basket of cakes, a jar of wine, and a joint of beef. So we see our two weary friends sitting down to a decent meal with something of an appetite now that they are in a quiet harbour. I wonder if it was the jar of wine that made Wenamon so careless, or perhaps put him to sleep? Anyhow, the next thing that he tells us is that that rascal of a sailor, whom I am sure we saw watching at the cabin door, has stolen the bag with his precious £2,800! "Then a man of my ship fled, having stolen vessels of gold amounting to 5 deben, four vessels of silver amounting to 20 deben, a sack of silver, 11 deben. Total of what he stole, 5 deben of gold, 31 deben of silver."

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! The envoy of the great god Amen stranded in a dirty little Syrian harbour, without a penny to bless himself with, and nothing wherewith to buy a single cedar log when he came to the Lebanon harbours! However, the worried man put a bold face on the matter, and posted away up to the palace of Prince Bedel, who had been so civil. "I have been robbed in thy harbour," he said to the prince. "Since thou art the king of this land, it is thy job to find my money for me. Indeed, the money belongs to very great people, to say nothing of Amen-Ra the King of Gods." Bedel was still civil. "With all respect to your excellency," he said, "I know nothing of this business. If the thief were one of my own subjects, I would pay you out of my treasury; but you say that he is one of your own crew. Stay here a while, however, and I will seek for him."

Wenamon, who had become quite friendly with skipper Mengebet, induced him to stay for nine days, and the search for the thief went on; but doubtless by this time he was "over the hills and far away," and had put Mount Carmel between himself and the local police. He would be able to live in luxury all the rest of his days on his ill-gotten gains, for £2,800 was a big sum in those days. At last Mengebet got tired of waiting at Dor, and Wenamon went up to the palace to make

a last appeal to Prince Bedel. Unluckily, just at this point there is a break in the roll, and we have lost all the fine speeches that passed between the prince and the angry envoy. Evidently, however, Wenamon was too pressing in his demands, for when the story begins again the prince and he have quarrelled, and the prince is telling Wenamon to hold his tongue. "He said to me, 'Be silent.'"

Then the roll is broken again, and we only get a chance word or two to help us to picture the ship calling at Tyre, and leaving again at dawn. When we next see the good priest he seems to be at Sidon, and he is clearly getting desperate as he comes nearer and nearer to the Lebanon, and is as penniless as ever. At Sidon some Thekel traders come on board to trade, or to arrange about loading some cargo for Byblos. Wenamon, striding impatiently up and down the deck, sees the glint of money as they talk business, and in a moment the honest man, who probably never hurt a fly in his life, has made up his mind to dark deeds of violence. He calls Mengebet aside, and explains his plan to him; and the skipper agrees to it, and calls up two or three of his hands. Just as the innocent merchants are packing up to go ashore again, Wenamon and the sailors make a rush on them. Wenamon grabs the bag of money, and tells them that he is taking it as payment for his own money which was lost in a Thekel port. "They went away," he says, in the most matter-of-fact fashion. You can imagine how they went away—hustled over the side by a lot of rough Syrian sailors, with plenty of cursing on both sides, while the rest of the crew cast off the warps, and got the big square mainsail up. Think of what depths a decent priest of Amen, "The Eldest of the Hall," may be reduced to when he has a big commission on hand, and no money to discharge it with!

Retribution was awaiting Wenamon, however, for his lapse into piracy. Fast as Mengebet had cleared out of Sidon after the theft, his slow old ship was evidently outsailed by another vessel bound, like himself, for Byblos. All the way, after the other ship passed them, one fancies Wenamon's conscience growing more and more troublesome, and at last, as the harbour of Byblos hove in sight, he got so anxious over the great secret which had been entrusted to him that he could bear the strain no longer, and had to do something to relieve his nerves. So now he lets us into the secret which he has kept so long. There was Another besides Wenamon and his secretary sailing in that tarry old galley from Tanis. His brother priests had entrusted to him, as a kind of mascot, a very sacred and precious image of Amen, a kind of traveller's patron-god, called "Amen-of-the-Road," which

was supposed to bring luck to the fortunate individual who had it in his keeping. Amen-of-the-Road had not done his servant much good up to now, and now he was more of a worry than anything else. What if he should fall into the hands of some of these unbelieving pagans of Byblos—especially when one remembered that one's own hands were not too clean, and that there might be trouble ahead? One never knew what Byblos might have heard about that rash money-grabbing in the harbour of Sidon. So poor anxious Wenamon went down below and made a hiding-place for his precious doll. "I made a place of concealment, I hid Amen-of-the-Road, and I placed his things in it." Then he waited to see what would happen.

He had not long to wait. No sooner was Mengebet safely moored in the harbour at Byblos than the harbour-master came down with a curt message from Zakar-Baal, the prince of the town. "Get out of my harbour!" Here was an end of all things for poor Wenamon. He sent a humble message up to the palace, entreating to be allowed at least to wait till a ship was sailing for Egypt; but every day for nineteen days the stiff figure of the harbour-master appeared on the quay and delivered his doleful chant: "Get out of my harbour!"

Still, when a prince tells you to begone, and yet allows you to stay for nineteen days on end, in spite of repeating his command every day, you begin to suspect that he is not quite so anxious to get rid of you as he pretends to be, and that he has something else up his sleeve. Wenamon evidently thought so, anyway, and perhaps he had good reason to believe it, for some of that silver which he stole at Sidon may have been finding its way up to the palace to oil the palms of Zakar-Baal, or some of his courtiers. At last, however, Wenamon got tired of waiting, and finding that a ship was sailing for Egypt immediately, he took a passage for himself and his secretary, and put their luggage on board. One precious thing he did not allow to go with the rest. Amen-of-the-Road was too sacred to be carried on board in broad daylight, to be gazed upon by profane eyes. Wenamon hung about the quay all day, longing for the darkness, and carrying the god carefully wrapped up under his cloak. "I waited for the darkness, saying, 'When it descends, I will embark the god also, that no other eye may see him.'"

Night came on at last, and Wenamon was just slinking on board when suddenly the rough hand of the harbour-master fell on his shoulder, and that too well-known voice sounded in his ears. But what was this new song he was singing? Instead of "Get out of my harbour," it was, "Remain near the prince till the morning!" Thi:

was the last straw, and Wenamon naturally concluded that it was a trick to make him lose the ship for Egypt, so that he could be disposed of at leisure. "I said to him, 'Art thou not he who continually came to me daily, saying, "Get out of my harbour"? Dost thou not say, "Remain," in order to let the ship that I have found depart, that thou mayest come and say again, "Away"?'" But the harbour-master was quite in earnest. He posted off up to the palace, and came down again with the order, "Remain until morning near the king."

What had been happening was this. I fancy that some of Wenamon's stolen silver had been getting apparently into the right hands, and that evening when the evening sacrifice was being offered to Baal of Byblos, one of the pages of the court fell into a religious frenzy, and shouted continually: "Bring the god hither. Bring the messenger of Amen who hath him. Send him, and let him go." Just about a century later, and over the hills to the south of Byblos, a frenzy like that came on the man who was to lead Israel, so that everybody said: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But this boy at Byblos is the first example we know of that religious excitement which was supposed to mean possession by the spirit of God; though one doubts if, in this case, it was not possession by a few silver deben.

Next morning Wenamon was ushered up to the palace, and found the prince, as he says, "leaning his back against a window, while the waves of the Great Syrian Sea beat against the wall behind him." "I said to him, 'The blessing of Amen upon you.'" But Zakar-Baal was not having any blessings of Amen in the meantime. He was very gruff. "He said to me, 'How long is it since thou camest away from the abode of Amen?' I answered, 'Five months and one day until now.'"

All the time Wenamon had been shaking in his shoes, dreading one question. Now Zakar-Baal shot it at him. "Behold, if thou art a true man, where is the writing of Amen, which should be in thine hand?" Poor Wenamon had no better excuse to make than that he had left it behind him at Tanis; and Zakar-Baal sniffed at that as a very lame excuse indeed. For a while the two fenced with one another, giving brag for brag about the number of ships they could command, until at last Wenamon felt that things were getting too hot, and that he had better hold his tongue. "Then I was silent in that great hour. He answered and said to me, 'On what business hast thou come hither?' I said to him, 'I have come after the timber for the great and august barge of Amen-Ra, King of Gods. Thy father gave it, thy grandfather gave it, and thou also wilt give it.' So spake

I to him." But it is easy to see the poor priest shaking in his sandals all the time he was speaking the bold words, and wondering how long his head would be on his shoulders.

Zakar-Baal, however, was too much of a business man to get angry over a matter in which cash might be made. "He said to me, 'Truly, they did it. Give me money for doing it, and I also will do it. Our regular agents put through the business, and Pharaoh sent six ships laden with Egyptian goods, which were unloaded into our storehouses. Do thou the like, and we shall do business.'" To prove what he said, Zakar-Baal called for the family ledgers, in which this house of merchant princes had kept the record of its transactions for generations. The entries were turned up, and read out to the Egyptian envoy. They showed that Egypt had, first and last, paid something like £70,000 for cedar delivered. After this home thrust, Wenamon had nothing to plead but the indebtedness of Byblos, as of other places, to the blessings and gifts of the god; and Zakar-Baal answered that the blessings of Amen were all very well, and he prized them all right, but what he wanted for his cedar was hard cash! Finally, Wenamon painted a noble picture of the prosperity that would come to the prince in this life if he sent the cedar, and the prince, who of course meant all the time to sell the cedar, at last made a bargain. He was to send the chief timbers for the keel, the stern-post, the fore-foot, and four other great beams, to Egypt at once. Wenamon's secretary was to go with them and bring back more cash and goods to pay for everything, and then the rest of the wood would be sent. Meantime Wenamon was to stay on at Byblos, as security for the timbers already sent.

In due course the goods and money came back from Egypt, and Zakar-Baal at once sent up 300 men and 300 oxen to the Lebanon to cut cedar, and drag the great logs down to the harbour—just as Hiram of Tyre did later for Solomon. At last the whole cargo was brought down, and the prince and Wenamon went out together to view them before they were loaded. "Well," said the prince, "there are your logs. I have done for you what my fathers did, though you haven't done for me what thy fathers did. Now load your logs, for I have given orders for them to be handed over to you."

Wenamon's thoughts were too deep for words, and he looked out over the sea, with a heart that was overflowing. Amen-of-the-Road hadn't let him down after all. But as he thought of the stormy seas to be sailed over homewards, his face fell, and Zakar-Baal, noticing the change, could not help giving him a last bit of chaff just to finish

up with. "Don't think of the terror of the sea," he said. "Think of my terror. After all, aren't you the lucky man to get off so easily from that? How would you like to have been one of the envoys of Ramses IX., who were kept seventeen years here and died in this place? Take him," he said, turning to one of his attendants, "and show him their graves." But Wenamon was now another man since he had got his job accomplished, and he gave back the prince tit for tat. "Ah," he said, "you know perfectly well that you are as proud as you can be of having had to do with me. Don't I too know perfectly well that you will have a fine tombstone made for yourself, and put upon it how you felled and loaded timber for the great barge of Amen-Ra, King of Gods? And then," he added, keeping his sorest hit for the last, "in future days (when you are dead and in hell anyway) when any messenger comes from Egypt who can read, he will read your name and what you did, and you will get off a little easier in the underworld, and have a drop of water to cool your tongue." "Now," said Zakar-Baal, who must have had his own rough sense of fun—"now you're talking, anyway."

I daresay that Wenamon now thought that his troubles were over. He went down to the beach and sat gloating over his beloved cedar logs. Just at that moment he lifted up his eyes, and there were eleven ships making for the harbour—Thekel ships, he could see at a glance. The harbour-master hailed them to ask their business as they passed the mole-head, and Wenamon was thunderstruck to hear the answer, "Arrest Wenamon! Let not a ship of his pass to Egypt!" It was too much. After all his toils, to be caught up at the finish by the consequences of that rash act in the harbour of Sidon. The poor man sat down on the beach and wept. Zakar-Baal, sitting at his window again, saw him, and sent down to ask what was the matter now. When he heard, he did his best to cheer the miserable man up. First, he sent him down some mutton and two jars of wine, so that he might have a good meal. Then, remembering that there was an Egyptian lady, a travelling minstrel, in Byblos, he sent her down to sing to him, and make things a little brighter. If Wenamon had met a person of the reputation of Tentnut (the lady in question) in Thebes, he would have drawn in his white linen robe for fear of being soiled by contact with her; but to see an Egyptian face and hear an Egyptian voice in this abominable Syrian town was a comfort, no matter whom they belonged to.

Next morning Zakar-Baal had Wenamon and the Thekel sailors both up to his palace, and the Thekel rogues were keen to have the

Egyptian envoy arrested for his lawless action at Sidon. But Zakar-Baal was afraid to take such a bold step as to arrest a high official of Egypt, even though Pharaoh's name was no longer a thing to conjure with as in the days of old. He solved the problem in a thoroughly Semitic manner. "I cannot arrest the envoy of Amen in my land," he said; "let me send him away, and then you can sail after him and catch him yourselves." No doubt he insisted on Wenamon having a start from his pursuers, but poor Wenamon must have thought ruefully, as he went down to the harbour, how poor a chance his lumbering old cargo ship had against the swift light galleys of the Thekel pirates.

But Amen-of-the-Road, who had done nothing so far to earn his reputation, was now to show what he could do for his much-tried servant. Scarcely were the ships well clear of the harbour when a tremendous storm came on. Wenamon's stout ship was blown helplessly before the wind; what became of the Thekel galleys we don't know. Perhaps they were swamped; perhaps, when they saw the heavy weather that the ship ahead was making of it they thought better of it, and ran for shelter. Anyhow, we hear no more of them. Wenamon was cast, at the end of the storm, like St. Paul later, "on a certain island," which turned out to be Cyprus.

His troubles were not yet over. According to the usual amiable custom of long ago (not so long ago in many cases) the inhabitants of the island, as soon as they saw him, cried out unanimously: "Here's a shipwrecked man; come, let us kill him." The poor draggled wretch was hauled along the streets to be sacrificed, when suddenly the Queen of Cyprus, Hatiba, appeared in the street, going from one palace to another. Wenamon dragged himself from the hands that held him and threw himself at the feet of the great lady. Then he rose up and cried: "Is there anybody here who speaks Egyptian?" A courtier came forward. "I speak it," he said. Then Wenamon poured forth his woes in eloquent Egyptian, which the interpreter translated to the queen. "I have often heard," he said, "that though injustice is done in every other land of the world, there is justice in Cyprus. But now when I have come here, you are doing injustice to me right away." Queen Hatiba broke in: "What is this that thou sayest?" And Wenamon burst into a noble harangue, explaining how great a man he was in his own land, and what terrible vengeance would be taken on any one who harmed him. "I am a messenger of Amen," he said, "for whom they will seek unceasingly, and if the crew of the ship from Byblos is killed, their lord will kill ten crews of thine."

Queen Hatiba was duly impressed. "She had the people called off, and stationed guards before her. She said to me: 'Pass the night——'" And then, just at the critical moment, the provoking papyrus is finally broken, and we shall never know what else she really said. The last thing we see is Wenamon, wet and weary, but still full of confidence again, now that it is a business of talking, waving his one arm largely abroad as he demonstrates how big a man he is in his own country, while the other arm is tightly clasped around the wonderful little image of Amen-of-the-Road, which had brought him through such breathless 'scapes by land and sea.

What happened to him in the end we are never likely to know, nor how the cedar logs got to Thebes. Certainly he must have got home safely, since he was able to write the story of his adventures, though what his report was doing at El-Hibeh, instead of at Thebes, is another story. Perhaps the roll that the fellahin found was only a copy which he made for his own folks at home. In that case, there is still a dim possibility that some day we may come upon the other copy which he sent in to the high priest, Herhor, at Thebes, and may hear the end of his Odyssey; but that is scarcely likely. In any case we can be glad, as he was, that after so many hardships the worthy man got home at last to his native El-Hibeh, to pose for the rest of his life as the much-travelled hero of the country town.

Strange to think, is it not, that these quaint and curious things were happening at the very time when the Hebrews were fighting for dear life within a few miles of it all, over the hills? Eli's sons and the rest of the Hebrew army being cut down at Aphek, and the Ark of the Covenant being carried off by the triumphant Philistines; and all the time, down on the coast, men quietly trading, and still more quietly stealing, and merchant princes turning up their old ledgers to see how much had been paid for cedar wood, just as if there had never been such a thing as war in the world. One thing—perhaps the most important thing that we notice in the whole story—is the strange mixture of contempt and respect with which the Phœnician prince regards Egypt. He no longer fears her; the day has long since gone by when to mention Pharaoh was to call up a picture of Thothmes III. leading his war fleet into Byblos in his royal galley, or marshalling his army on the shore for the long march inland. To him "Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is but a noise," as the Bible puts it. But all the same, he has still a deep respect for Egypt, because he recognizes that everything that he and his people know, in their busy town on the Phœnician coast, was taught them by that wonderful land of the Nile, where

there was learning and wisdom long before his race was a nation at all.

"For Amen equips all lands," said Zakar-Baal, even in the middle of his tormenting of Wenamon; "he equips them, having first equipped the land of Egypt, whence thou camest. For artisanship came forth from it, to reach my place of abode; and teaching came forth from it, to reach my place of abode." And that is still Egypt's great claim upon us, as it was upon the prince of Byblos. There have been nations of far greater warlike might than ever Egypt possessed, but we look still to her with reverence and kindness, because "artisanship came forth from her to reach our place of abode, and teaching came forth from her to reach our place of abode."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE NORTHERN TIGER

OUR story has been running on now for the best part of 3,000 years, and yet we have only occasionally heard the name of one of the chief actors in it. Babylonia has had its wonderful history of the old Sumerian people, who made those beautiful things that have been coming to light from the tombs of King A-bar-gi and Queen Sûb-ad and the rest, at Ur of the Chaldees, and who built the great temple-towers at Ur and other places. Then the star of the Sumerians has set, and Babylon itself has become the queen of a great empire under the wise king Hammurabi ; and after a while strangers, horse-users from Central Asia (perhaps originally from India) have conquered Babylon, and have settled down to make themselves comfortable and lazy in the fertile plain of the Euphrates. Egypt has grown from a handful of quarrelling little states into a single strong nation, her Old Kingdom Pharaohs have built their wonderful pyramids, explored Central Africa, and passed away ; and her Middle Kingdom Senuserts and Amenemhats have added glory to the glories that Khufu and Khafra left. The shame of her subjection to the Shepherd Princes has been wiped out, and Thothmes III. has built up the great empire which stretches from the head of the Euphrates to the Fourth Cataract of the Nile. And then that, too, has passed away, and Egypt, worn and weary, is creeping downhill towards her sunset. The Sea-peoples have made their bid for conquest, and have failed, but have left behind them in Palestine the Philistines to dispute the land with the growing Hebrew nation. Israel has founded a kingship, and has found her ideal king in David, after Saul's failure ; and again, Solomon's magnificence has proved too great a strain upon the little nation, and it has split into two warring sections, which hate each other with all the bitterness of brothers estranged. And all this time we have only heard, once or twice, a far-off echo of the name that was to be the terror of the Ancient East from now onwards almost to the end of our story—the name of Assyria.

Once and again during the long wars of Thothmes III. ambassadors

from the little state on the upper waters of the Tigris came into the camp of the great conqueror, bearing a present from the "chief of Assur," as the Egyptian scribe rather contemptuously calls him in his record, putting down the gift as "tribute." Now it would be some lumps of fine lapis lazuli, which the Egyptians loved for its beautiful blue colour, now it would be some horses, and a chariot-front in fine wood, and some logs of costly wood. Then, fifty years later, we begin to hear, among the voices of the other kings of the East, who were all begging for gold from Amenhotep the Magnificent, the voice of Ashur-uballit, King of Assyria. He too, like all the rest of the sturdy beggars, is wanting gold, and has not the least hesitation in asking for plenty of it. "I am building a new palace, which I am about to finish," he writes to Amenhotep's unlucky son, Akhenaten. "Send me as much gold as is needed for its construction and furnishing. At the time when Ashur-nadin-akhi, my father, sent to Egypt, twenty talents of gold were sent to him. Moreover, when the King of Hanigalbat (Mitanni) sent to Egypt, to your father, he sent to him twenty talents of gold. Surely I am as good as that King of Hanigalbat, and yet you have only sent me a little gold." Already, you see, Assyria was showing that she did not mean to lose anything good that was going for want of persistence in asking for it. Later, she did not ask—she took!

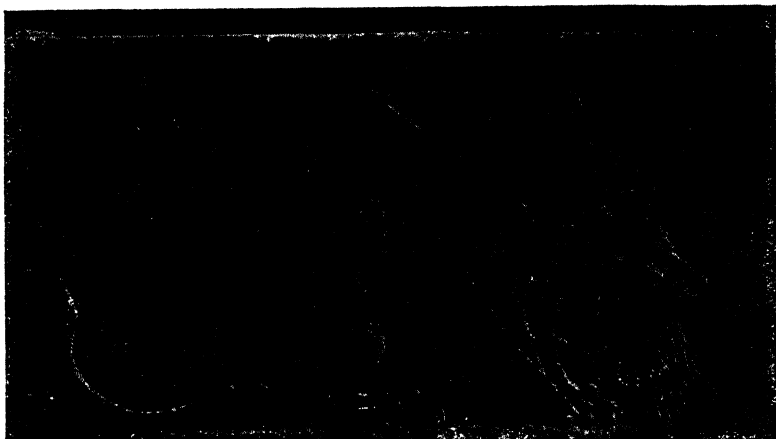
Before long poor Akhenaten has another letter in his post-bag which mentions Assyria. This time it is from King Burraburiash of Babylon. The Babylonian has just heard that Assyria has been writing letters to Egypt, and he is very indignant, for he considers that the Assyrians are his vassals, though the Assyrians thought quite differently. "As for the Assyrians, who are my dependents," he writes, "I myself wrote to thee about them. Why have they come to thy land? If thou lovest me, they shall bring about no result; with empty hands let them go home again." So you see that, until pretty far on in our story, we do not hear a great deal about Assyria, and what little we do hear is rather in the way of letting us know that Assyria was a very small affair indeed, so far, as compared with the great nations—Babylon, Egypt, and the Hittites, or even with Mitanni. Indeed, one of the kings of Mitanni had not only claimed to be the overlord of Assyria, but had invaded the country, and had carried off, "by his might and power," the palace doors of silver and gold from the capital, to adorn his own capital of Washshukkani. It was in 1450 B.C. or so that King Shaushshatar made his raid upon Ashur, just about the time when Amenhotep II. of Egypt was using his big bow that nobody else could bend, in his fights with the Asiatics. So you see how late it

was before Assyria counted for very much in the struggle of the nations. Soon, however, all that was to be changed, and the Near East was to cower whenever the baleful shadow of Assyria fell across it.

Who the Assyrians were, to begin with, we do not exactly know. The first people who lived on the uplands of the Tigris seem to have been of the same stock as the Sumerians who had done so much in Babylonia; but before Assyria begins to figure in the story, the Sumerians had been conquered, just as they were in Babylonia, by an invading race who seem to have come from the mountain land north of the Tigris in Asia Minor, but who spoke a language not differing very much from their neighbours and rivals in Babylonia. In fact, though the Hebrews hated and feared the Assyrians as they hated and feared no other people in the world, they were yet distant cousins of the race they dreaded.

But the new masters of the uplands of Mesopotamia soon grew into a race very different from their cousins in the rich plains of Babylonia, or in the narrow mountain-land of Palestine. Their country itself made for a hardier race than was bred on the soft soil of Babylonia. The fertile plains near the mouths of the two great rivers might grow more abundant harvests than any other land in the world save the Nile valley; but, no matter how hardy a race might be when it first came upon those luxuriant levels, it soon grew soft and content with its fine crops, and left the struggle to less comfortable races. Babylon could still fight when she was cornered, but fighting was not to her mind so long as she could make money, worship her gods, and observe the stars. It would be hard to find a great nation which has so sluggish and inglorious a record for centuries as has Babylonia during the time when first Egypt, and then Assyria, were spending themselves for the mastery of the ancient world.

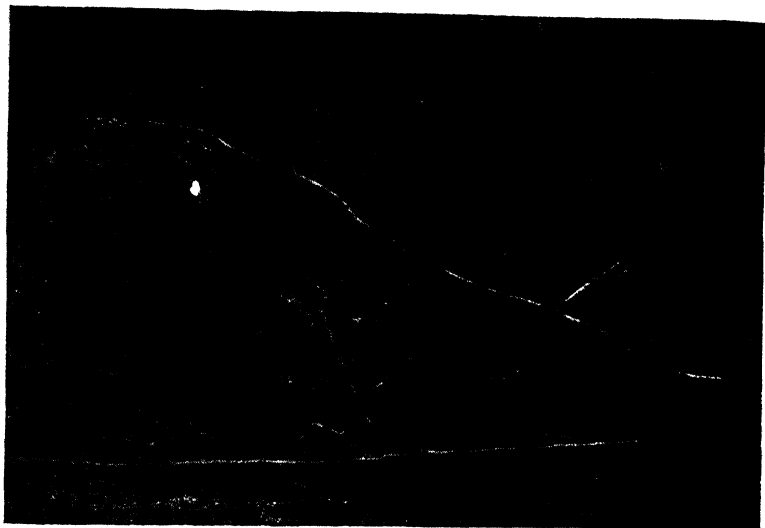
It was otherwise with the Assyrians. Their uplands could be fertile enough, but only on the condition of constant toil. On every side of them, from the hills on the north and the deserts of the south, they were surrounded by races who grudged them their place, and were eager to dispute the land with them; not least, they had to contend with the wild beasts which we saw, at the beginning of our story, being hunted and slain by the kings of Egypt and Assyria in numbers which show how abundant they must have been. Everything about the land made for a race of fighters; and the stock of which the Assyrians came was the very stock to produce such a race, given the chance. The consequence was that, except the Romans, I suppose there has never been a people in the history of the world



ASSYRIAN SCULPTURE : THE DYING LION.

who offer us such a perfect picture of a military race as does the Assyrian. Indeed, even the Romans must come second to them, in some respects, in this questionable glory, for even if you struck the wars out of the Romans' record, there would still be a great deal left that makes the world their debtor ; but war is practically the whole of the Assyrian story.

They were, it is true, among the most wonderful artists the world has seen, and their sculptures of battle and the chase have scarcely been matched by any race for the truth and vividness with which they represent animal life—and death. They built magnificent palaces, far more gorgeous than those of Ancient Egypt, and gathered within their walls noble libraries which have taught us much of what we know about the old world, its history and its beliefs. But their art reeks of blood and cruelty ; their splendid palaces were adorned with decorations which kept the vilest barbarisms of warfare perpetually under the eyes of king and courtier as a lovely and desirable thing ; and their libraries consisted mainly of books borrowed and copied from their Babylonian rivals. Of her own, Assyria has left us scarcely anything save the memory of a fierce and ruthless tyranny which poured out human life like water in the attainment of its selfish ends—a yoke so heavy and so cruel that when at last it was broken, the whole ancient world sent up one great shout of joy. "There is no healing of thy bruise," wrote the prophet Nahum, when the news of the fall of



ASSYRIAN SCULPTURE : THE DYING LIONESS.

Nineveh flew abroad through an incredulous world ; " thy wound is grievous ; all that hear the report of thee shall clap the hands over thee : for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually ? "

The fact is, that in spite of all the wonderful things which Assyria has left to us in the ruined palaces of its great kings, it was simply the great robber nation of the old world, which, for nearly five centuries, slaughtered and pillaged and burned with the most ruthless ferocity on every hand, until there was not a people that did not hate its pitiless tyrant with a perfect hatred. The whole organization of the country existed simply for one object—the keeping up of such a perfect war-machine that no other land would be able to stand against an Assyrian army in the field. An Assyrian king who led his army to victory, and only allowed it enough rest to gather fresh strength for another aggression, was the idol of his people—just so long as he was successful. If he was defeated, or even if he failed to show his war-dogs sufficient sport, and " abode in the land," as the saying went, longer than pleased the military gluttons for slaughter and loot, he was removed by ways which were quite familiar, and a more ruthless soldier was set up in his stead. Even so great a warrior as Tukulti-Enurta I. found his past victories no safeguard when defeat had

clouded his glory, and fell by the hand of his own son in the new royal city which he had built to the glory of his own name. When the mighty Sennacherib's latter years were clouded with the failure of his policy in Babylonia, it was again murder by his own son which removed the great conqueror from the scene.

There is a little phrase in the Second Book of Samuel which lets you see how completely war was thought of in those days as the sport of kings. "At the return of the year," it says, "at the time when kings go forth to battle"—the spring campaign coming as regularly as the spring flowers. Well, other kings might sometimes fail to lead out their armies when the spring flowers came; but if the King of Assyria failed, it was at his own peril, and if he failed too often, then he got no more chances, but disappeared into a bloodstained grave, to make room for one who would be more punctual with his war timetable. Other kingdoms were often at war; Assyria was almost always at war, and even in the unusual times when she had no fighting on hand, her army was always on a war footing, ready to march at a moment's notice. It was there that her safety lay. Her men were no braver than the men of other races; her land was not so large or so populous as many of the other lands; every one of them would have rejoiced in the chance of destroying her; but she knew that her only safety lay in being always prepared, and she kept the most terrible weapon of the old world always ready to strike.

Many a time the trembling nations around her resolved that they would be rid for ever of her tyranny, and formed a league against her; but before they could get together, and gather and equip their scattered armies, the Assyrian army, always mobilized and always equipped, was in the midst of them, scattering them like a covey of partridges, and clutching the strongest of them by the throat before he could move a finger; and when the troops marched home again there was always one country, often more, left lying bleeding and exhausted, scorched with fire and drenched with blood. I daresay that the fault was not always on the one side, and that sometimes Assyria had her wrongs to avenge; but for once that this was the case, there were ten times that it was not, and that Assyria slew and burned just for the love of the sport. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled," said the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, as he watched the resistless Assyrian approach, "and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." Well did the Assyrian know that;

but he was resolved that that day should never come, so long as he could ward it off.

So, because violence and cruelty had made Assyria the best-hated land in the world, more violence and cruelty were lavished to keep her from the punishment which her ill-deeds had deserved, until at last the whole world of the Ancient East lay cowering in terror before the giant bully, and he said himself: "As one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped." It was not to last for ever, for the very excess of her own effort to crush all other nations exhausted herself, and left her at last an easy prey; but for the centuries that it did last, Assyrian frightfulness was a very real and very dreadful thing to the trembling nations which lay under its shadow.

"For the greater part of its existence," says a famous scholar, "Assyria was the scourge of the nations, and sucked the blood of other races. It lived on the tribute of subject states, and conquest ever meant added tribute in all necessities and luxuries of life, besides an annual demand for men and horses, cattle and sheep, grain and wool to supply the needs of the army and the city. The army overshadowed everything else, and its demands and needs made incessant expeditions imperative to keep it content. Any prolonged inactivity on the part of the king endangered his throne, and while he often was able to send trusty generals to carry on distant campaigns, a victorious general was too often the next successor to the throne."

But it was not only that Assyria was always carrying on war; it was the way in which she carried it on that was the terror. War, at its very best (if it has a best) is a cruel thing, and the nation that makes a practice of it inevitably grows hard and cruel, and does things in the end which she would have scorned had not her heart grown callous and fierce. I have told you how genial and kindly a race were the ancient Egyptians, but I have also had to tell you how their young king, Amenhotep II. (the man with the big bow) sailed up the Nile to Thebes with six miserable prisoners hanging head downwards at the bow of his barge, and then clubbed the poor half-dead wretches in the temple of Amen as an offering to the god, and how he sent the seventh far away up into the Sûdan, to be hung at last upon the walls of the frontier town. These things strike you as being doubly horrible because they seem so contrary to the nature of the race that does them. But, after all, they are the exception in Egyptian story, and they were done simply because Egypt had been fighting steadily for a

whole generation, and hearts had grown fierce and callous, just as I told you.

But in the case of Assyria such things would not have been exceptions in the very least, unless in the sense that they were more merciful than the usual Assyrian practice. Acts of cruelty like that of King Amenhotep no Assyrian king would have thought worth mentioning. He did things far more frightful than that continually, and not only did them, but got the most skilful sculptors of his country to carve pictures of them in alabaster and fasten them round the walls of his palace, so that he might feast his eyes upon them every day and all day. When he captured a town, instead of letting the beaten chief come and "smell the ground" at his feet, and get off with some hard words and a payment (as Thothmes III. used to do), he would have the miserable wretch dragged into his presence by a cord fixed into a ring which was passed through the prisoner's nostrils. Then when he had glutted his eyes with the sight of his captive's misery, he would jerk up the poor wretch's head by the cord, and, taking his spear, he would slowly thrust it first into the one eye and then into the other of the miserable creature who had dared to fight against His Mightiness, and hand him over to the executioners. They would peg him out like a spread eagle on the ground, having first pulled out his tongue, and would then strip the skin from his tortured body, leaving it to writhe and twist like a crushed worm in the blazing sunshine, until death, more merciful than the Assyrian, put an end to its sufferings.

That was a commonplace of Assyrian warfare, and what the king himself did to the chief, his soldiers were doing to scores of the lesser captives at the same time. When an Assyrian army captured a city, it became a hell upon earth, until the last quiver of life had passed from the tortured limbs of the last captive who was not thought worth carrying away; then, often, the place was fired, and the blackened ruins were sown with salt.

Listen to King Ashurnasirpal, one of the great warriors of Assyria, and a very great and lordly gentleman, with a fine taste in art, as he describes how he treated a city in the mountain-land of central Asia Minor, which had refused to open its gates to him. "I drew near to the city of Tela. The city was very strong; three walls surrounded it. The inhabitants trusted to their strong walls and their numerous soldiers; they did not come down or embrace my feet. With battle and slaughter I assaulted and took the city. Three thousand warriors I slew in battle. Their booty and possessions, cattle, sheep, I carried away; many captives I burned with fire. Many of their soldiers I

took alive ; of some I cut off hands and limbs ; of others the noses, ears, and arms ; of many soldiers I put out the eyes. I reared a column of the living, and a column of heads. I hung up on high their heads on trees in the neighbourhood of their city. Their boys and girls I burned up in the flame. I devastated the city, dug it up, in fire burned it ; I annihilated it." And, as you see, King Ashurnasirpal not only did such things, from which the sun and moon might have hidden their faces, but was quite proud of doing them, and had the story of the doing of them carved in stone, so that all future ages might be able to read it, and know how mighty a conqueror he was—and how great a beast !

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah says that the Assyrian, though he did not realize it, was just God's axe and saw, with which He shaped the nations as He pleased. I daresay it was true, but it was terribly rough hewing that the axe and saw did, and one need not wonder that the nations shouted with gladness when they were broken and cast aside.

Well, we have seen the first appearances of this robber nation on the stage of our story—certainly not very distinguished ones, with their presents of lapis lazuli and timber to the conqueror Thothmes, and their greedy begging of gold from Akhenaten. Indeed, it was only with that same King Ashur-uballit, who was so eager for 20 talents of gold so that he could be upsides with "that King of Hanigalbat," that Assyria began to grow, and make anything of a figure among the nations. Ashur-uballit was greedy of other things as well as gold, and he played his cards in the great game of beggar-my-neighbour with a masterly hand. His little kingdom only consisted of a few square miles round the city of Ashur when he came to the throne ; but before he died he saw Assyria taking her place as one of the great powers of the old world, with which even the greatest of the older powers had to reckon. King Burraburiash of Babylon might talk of "the Assyrians my vassals," when he wrote to Pharaoh, and be indignant that they had presumed to send an embassy anywhere ; but before Ashur-uballit died he had married his daughter to the successor of Burraburiash, and had marched an army into Babylon itself to settle the infant son of the marriage safely on the throne.

Then came a time of alternate advance and set-back. Now the growing kingdom would take a step forward, under a strong king ; now it would get a rebuff, and would see its stolen territory taken away again by the rightful owners. Then there came to the throne that famous fighter, Tukulti-Enurta, whom I have already mentioned, and we begin to hear in his annals of great raids into the heart of Asia

Minor, even to the shores of Lake Van, and phrases begin to sound in the tale that are to grow terribly familiar before long : " Four kings of Nairi-land stood forth in mighty array to make battle and conflict, but the ravines and gullies of the mountains received their blood." Babylonia was raided a second time, and after a battle its boy-king, Kashtiliash, was brought in chains to Assyria, and sacrificed before the god Ashur. Changed times from the days when Burraburiash wrote about " the Assyrians my vassals." But though it was easy enough sometimes to conquer Babylon, it was anything but easy to hold it, and before long Tukulti-Enurta was driven out of Babylonia again. That was enough ; he had once failed, and to the Assyrian mind—

" The valiant warrior, famed for fight,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour rasèd quite."

His own son, Ashur-nadin-apal, led the revolt against him, and the great soldier fell in the ruin of the city that he had called by his own name, Kar-Tukulti-Enurta. Assyria has to fall back and gather strength before she can make a fresh spring.

For a while Babylon, under the first wearer of the terrible name of Nebuchadnezzar, comes to the front again, and then there comes to the throne of Ashur another of those grim men of blood and iron who " made all the earth to tremble "—Tiglath-Pileser I. He had a good chance. Nebuchadnezzar I., after his brief triumph over Elam, had gone down in defeat. Egypt was breaking up into fragments, and had one king at Thebes and another at Tanis, as we saw in the story of Wenamon. Mitanni was gone for ever, and Syria and Palestine were a witch's cauldron of squabbling tribes—Philistine and Hebrew among them. One strong man with a good army might carve out for his land a fine empire among all these warring and weakened nations. Tiglath-Pileser concluded that he would be the strong man.

First he struck north-westwards, into the hill country of Asia Minor which we call to-day Kashiari, and met the warriors of Mushki (the Mesech of the Hebrew Psalm, " Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech "). They put 20,000 in battle array against him—to no avail. " The bodies of their warriors like the storm-god I hurled to earth, their blood in the ravines and on the heights of the mountains I made to flow down. Their heads I cut off, by the side of their cities like grain heaps I piled them up. Their spoil, their property, their possessions, to an unnumbered quantity I brought out."

Again he marched up through the mountains to "the lands of the distant kings who were on the shore of the Upper Sea, who had never known subjection." It was difficult marching, by blocked roads and narrow paths, and "over the seven bens, and the seven glens, and the seven mountain moors." He reached his farthest point far to the north, at Melazgerd, where you can see to this day the tablet he carved. Next he drove the Ahlamu westwards, and followed them to Carchemish, across the Euphrates, which his soldiers crossed on rafts laid on blown-up skins. Being in the great hunting region, he slaughtered ten mighty bull elephants, and captured four alive, somewhere near where Thothmes had hunted the great herd of 120 monsters. It was now that he made that tremendous bag of lions of which he tells us in that passage which I quoted to you at the beginning of our story—120 on foot, and 800 from his chariot. Amenhotep III. killed 102 fierce lions in ten years. Was Tiglath-Pileser the mightier hunter, or was he only the bigger liar?

Having had a taste of the joys of warring and hunting in the west, Tiglath-Pileser had to go west still farther on his next campaign. This time he swept right across North Syria to the Mediterranean, first of Assyrian kings to see what Thothmes would have called "the Very Green." Arvad, which had given Thothmes so much trouble, had learned wisdom from past experience, and fought no more against conquering kings, whether from the east or the south. Instead, the sailor folk of the Phœnician seaport gave the Assyrian king a joy-ride, "three double hours" to Simyra, which does not say much for the speed of the ships of Arvad; but perhaps His Majesty was seasick, or they may have had to lie-to. Perhaps it was that killing again took up the king's time, for they encountered a "horse of the sea," which may have been a whale, or may only have been a dolphin, and duly slaughtered it. It is strange to think that just at this very time our old friend Wenamon was trying hard to persuade the unfeeling Zakar-Baal of Byblos to give him cedar logs in exchange for the blessings of Amen. It is not impossible that when the much-worried Egyptian sailed at last for Egypt he might have sighted, far off on the northern horizon, the ships of Arvad, with Tiglath-Pileser on board engaged on the first whale hunt on record; but presumably Wenamon was thinking more of the Thekel pirate ships behind him than of Assyrian kings.

It was something like 500 years now since "the chief of Assur" had sent his embassy to Thothmes III. with those blocks of lapis lazuli which the Pharaoh listed as "tribute." Now the time had come

for the wheel to come full circle round. When Nesubanebedd, the Delta Pharaoh who ruled at Tanis, heard of the presence of the Assyrian king in what had been once the Egyptian Empire, he sent an embassy in his turn, with a present consisting of a *pagutu* (hippopotamus?) and a crocodile. Tiglath-Pileser, who had doubtless never heard of the embassy of his ancestor, records that he exhibited the crocodile to his people; but the shade of the old "chief of Assur" must have smiled to think how times had changed.

On his return home Tiglath-Pileser found his hands full, between raids of the desert Arameans and an attack from Babylon. But before long he had beaten off the men of the desert, and turned to teach Babylon the folly of meddling with Assyria. Babylon was captured for a second time, its palaces burned, and all its provinces towards Assyria taken possession of by the conqueror. This was the crowning triumph of the great soldier's reign, and he spent the rest of his time in works for the good of his own people. In fact, he makes it his boast—a rare one for an Assyrian king—that "I have made good the condition of my people; in peaceful habitations have I made them dwell." Presumably his idea of what constitutes a "peaceful habitation" would differ somewhat from ours; but undoubtedly he did his best for his own folk, however great a scourge of other nations he may have been.

Tiglath-Pileser died in 1102 B.C., just when the time of the Judges was dragging to its end in Israel. And then there comes down on Assyria a time of darkness, when we hear but little of her doings, save that she has lost much of what the great conqueror had won for her, and that her kings, in spite of an occasional triumph, have a hard task to make head against the enemies whom her cruelty had raised up for her on every side. That was the way with Assyria all through—a time of dazzling military glory, when her armies swept across the East from victory to victory; and then a time of exhaustion, when she had to recover, slowly and painfully, from the tremendous exertions of her conquests, and when all her foes took advantage of her weariness to assail her.

When next the curtain rolls up we begin to find ourselves in familiar surroundings, for the king who rules in Assyria is Ashurnasirpal, one of the greatest of her soldier kings, of whose frightfulness we have already seen something. He comes to the throne in 885 B.C., and one of the kings who send him gifts is Ethbaal, King of Tyre. Ethbaal, you may remember from your Bible, was father of a very famous, or infamous, woman—Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, King of Israel. So now

you can see where we are standing, and the story of the fierce Assyrian is beginning to come close to that of the Israelites. In a little while we shall see the two stories linking up into one, and little Israel getting drawn into the whirlpool of Assyrian conquest and intrigue. If you want to know exactly what is happening in Palestine when Ashurnasirpal first draws his terrible sword, Zimri and Omri are just fighting out their short struggle, after Zimri murdered King Elah ("Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"), and King Asa of Judah is in the middle of his long reign.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"THE ASSYRIAN CAME DOWN LIKE A WOLF ON THE FOLD."—I

AND now we are getting near, as things go in this story of many centuries, to the time of his coming. Already, indeed, you can almost hear the rattle of his chariots, and the steady tramp of his spearmen, for we are getting quite close up to familiar events, and, with the next reign to that of Ashurnasirpal, names that you know quite well from the Bible will begin to appear in the Assyrian records, and we shall begin to hear the Assyrian version of great events which we have met before in the pages of Kings and Chronicles. Moreover, we are coming to the time when we shall not only be able to read the Assyrian story, but also to see it, in the most astonishingly real set of pictures that any nation ever left behind them to tell of their glory and their brutality. For it is with King Ashurnasirpal that there begins that wonderful set of alabaster slabs on which the Assyrian sculptors carved the deeds of their kings, and which you can see any day in the galleries of our own British Museum.

I am not going to drag you through the endless campaigns of this famous warrior king, any more than through those of Thothmes III. One of them is very much like another—a monotonous record of slaughter, and far worse than slaughter. You have heard the king's own voice already, telling of his tender mercies to the city of Tela, which was so presumptuous as to resist his will. Multiply that frightful story by the score, and you will have a faint idea of the cruelty that Ashurnasirpal unleashed through the Eastern world, and the untold misery he caused to thousands of human beings. In his records, and still more in his sculptures, you get not only all "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war," but also all its vileness and beastliness depicted with such abominable power as is enough to make you loathe war for ever.

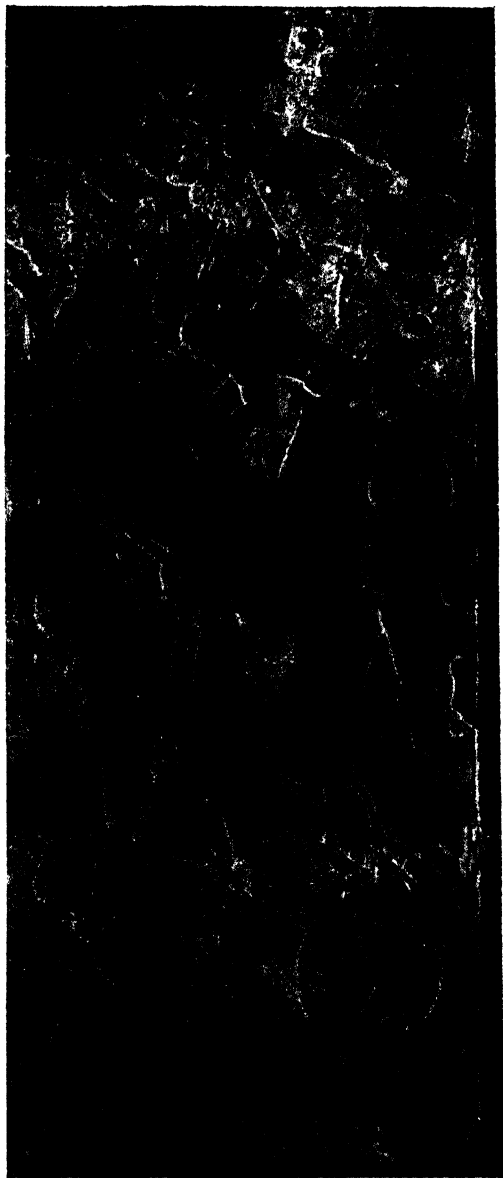
However much we, who have seen it in our own lives, may hate war, it is interesting, all the same, to get a close-up view of the cruel and brutal but wonderfully perfect machine with which Assyria crushed the nations into quivering submission. The great Assyrian

steam-roller was by far the most perfect war-machine that the ancient world ever saw. Not until Philip of Macedon built up the Macedonian phalanx, and his son Alexander showed how it could be handled, along with his armour-clad cavalry, to smash to pieces the hugest armies of the East, or until the Romans created a machine still more perfect than the Macedonian one, because more elastic and adaptable, was the war organization of the Assyrian kings surpassed. With its chariots and its cavalry, its iron infantry, and its powerful siege-train, whose battering-rams and sapping engines astonished and terrified the world, it was a thing apart in those days. Babylonia and Egypt had been making war for the best part of 3,000 years, more or less ; but they were children in the cruel art compared with this new-comer among the nations. It was the story of the professional and the amateur over again, and Assyria was the professional, who lived by war and for war. There was not an army in the ancient world that had a chance against the Assyrian army, if the terms were at all equal otherwise.

Here, then, is King Ashurnasirpal's army drawn up before Kalah, which he has made his capital instead of Ashur (Nineveh's turn has not come yet), ready to march out on what was perhaps his most famous campaign, when he reached the limit that Tiglath-Pileser had attained, and the Assyrian soldiers, for the first time for more than two centuries, looked out from the slopes of the Lebanon upon the blue Mediterranean.

The first thing you will notice is that armies have grown bigger since you saw Thothmes or Ramses II. marching out with their 20,000 or 25,000 men a few centuries ago. They are going to grow bigger yet, and the day will come when Assyria will put 120,000 men into the field in a desperate struggle to maintain her failing supremacy. But in the meantime they are probably at least double the numbers of the old hosts of the great Pharaohs, and probably Ashurnasirpal is leading out 50,000 to 60,000 men for his march to the sea.

First of the troops comes the chariot corps, with the king in his three-horse chariot at the head of it, his gaily-coloured umbrella sheltering him from the hot Assyrian sun. The chariots are much heavier than the swift Egyptian type, and have three horses instead of two. They consider themselves the crack corps of the army, and the noblemen and their sons mostly serve with them ; but already they are getting out of date, and the king is putting more and more trust in the corps that is to take their place eventually. Each chariot holds two men, a driver and a bowman. The bowman wears a peaked



ASSYRIAN CHARIOTS CHARGING THE ENEMY.
Slab in the British Museum from Ashurnasirpal's palace at Kalah.

bronze helmet, and a quilted cuirass with metal scales. A bow-case and a double quiver are fastened to the front and sides of the chariot, and a lance for close-quarter work is held in a bucket attached to the car.

Next come the cavalry. Their day is just beginning, and you are not to laugh when you see that each cavalier—each fighting cavalier, that is—is accompanied by a groom, who rides a spare horse beside him, and guides the fighting man's horse by a leading rein. Cavalry with nursemaids like that, you think, can surely not be of much use in battle. Ah, but wait. Even as it is, with their grooms doing no fighting, the fighting men of the cavalry only use up two horses per fighter against the chariot's three, and cavalry are far handier in awkward country than the cumbrous chariot. Their time is coming, and soon, with practice, they will be able to do without their nursemaids.

But now comes the backbone of the army—the infantry. Here are the heavy-armed infantry wearing conical helmets and cuirasses quilted with metal scales, heavy laced boots coming well up the leg, and carrying a 6-foot spear and a sword, with a big round shield shaped like a dish-cover. Behind them come the light infantry, with a crested helmet and a wicker shield, while the bowmen and slingers have no shield at all. Last of all comes rolling along the tank of ancient days—the terrible battering-ram which makes the walls of the strongest city run down like sand. This one is not going with the army on the long march, for they will find it easier to make a new one where it is needed than to trail the great lumbering thing with them; but the ram that will smash the wall of any Syrian town that dares to resist the king will be exactly like this one, with two towers, one to hold archers, the other to cover the ram, and with sides covered with rawhide, so that it will not easily catch fire when the defenders of the city fling torches down upon it. Threatened by so formidable an array, one does not wonder that most of the little kings of the west found it more convenient to submit than to fight, and sent in their tribute at once. With no very serious opposition, Ashurnasirpal reached his goal, and looked out across the waters of the Mediterranean, as Tiglath-Pileser had done before him.

"Then," he says, "I approached the slopes of Lebanon. To the great sea of Akharri I ascended. In the great sea I purified my weapons and offered sacrifices to the gods. Tribute of the kings on the shore of the sea, of Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Makhallata, Maica, Kaica, Akharri, and Aramade in the midst of the sea" (Arvad on its

island), "silver, gold, lead, copper, copper vessels, variegated and linen garments, a large and a small *pagutu*, *ushu* and *ukarinu* wood, tusks of the *nakhiru*, the sea monster, I received in tribute. They embraced my feet." Indeed the Phœnicians, in their eagerness to escape Ashurnasirpal's unwelcome attentions, sent him home with a perfect menagerie. "Fifteen mighty lions from the mountains, 50 cubs for the cages in the Assyrian palaces, a great and a little dolphin, wild bulls, elephants, francolins, male and female hippopotami, wild asses, gazelles, stags, panthers, were collected in the zoological gardens of Kalah."

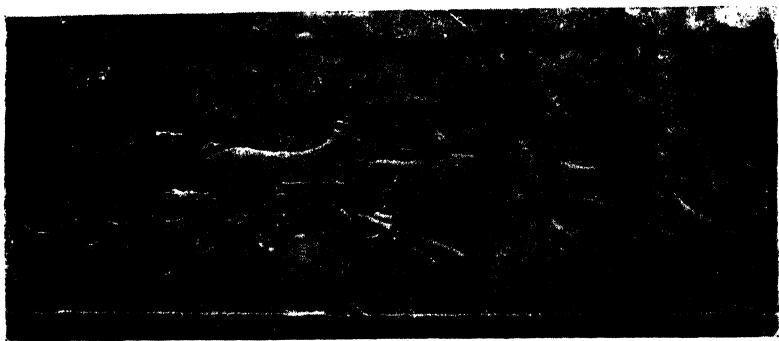
It was probably on this campaign that the king performed those feats of lion and bull slaying which he has caused to be sculptured on the walls of his palace at Kalah, and which are now among the treasures of the British Museum. Here you see the magnificent relief of the lion's last charge. Stricken deep through the chest and flank by the king's arrows, the great beast rears himself up, roaring in his fury, and grasps the back of the chariot with one mighty paw. But the king, quite undisturbed, bends his bow, as he swings round in the chariot, to send another shaft through the brain of the king of beasts, while the charioteer carefully steers his horses past the dead body of another lion which has already fallen to the deadly arrows of Ashurnasirpal. Here, again, as the wild bull thrusts its horns past the very side of the king, as he stands in his chariot, Ashurnasirpal, coolly turning, thrusts his dagger through the spinal cord of the great brute, and drops it dead behind him. Later, in the time of Ashurbanipal, you will see still more highly finished pictures of the royal sport, but none whose vigour and vividness surpass these of the earlier king.

When you have looked at them, go and look at the statue of Ashurnasirpal himself, as it stands in the Assyrian Gallery—the best of all Assyrian statues left to us. You will not admire it much as sculpture—the Assyrian artist makes a poor show beside his Egyptian brother, who was one of the master sculptors of all time—but at least it will show how an Assyrian king looked in the days when the wolf was beginning to rouse himself again for his raids on the folds of the nations. "A rude, heroic figure, he stands upright before his god, looking straight forward, his brawny arms bare, the left hand holding to his breast the mace, weapon of the soldier, but the right dropped by his side, grasping the sceptre, emblematic of the shepherd of his people." This was the kind of figure that King Ahab of Israel met in battle at Karkar, and fled from, good soldier though he was; that Jehu "smelt the ground" before, as we see him still on the Black Obelisk of Shal-

maneser; that Hezekiah's ambassadors trembled before at Lachish, before the angel of the Lord had smitten down his pride. Ashurnasirpal, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib—they were all of the same type, widely as they might differ in many things. "Shepherds," if you like, "of their own people," but wolves to the flocks of all other kings.

Shalmaneser III., who succeeded his mighty father, showed himself his worthy successor, so far as fighting was concerned. During the thirty-five years of his reign he made thirty-two campaigns of which he has left us the record, so that there could be no grumbles against him for not giving his army enough to do. If the father's campaigns were too long to drag you through, much more so were those of the son; but one must be mentioned, because it brought him across the path of Ahab of Israel, and gave that unlucky monarch a sharp check, just when he seemed to be prospering most. It was now the year 854 B.C. Omri had long since put his rival Zimri out of the way, and had made Samaria his new capital. There he had built a fine palace on the hilltop, covering an acre and a half, and modelled on the vast palaces of Kalah or Babylon. But Ahab and his Tyrian wife, Jezebel, were not satisfied with the house that had pleased his father, and before they had finished their additions to it the palace was nearly double the size of Omri's great house. You can see to this day the splendid building as Ahab left it and Herod adorned it. Ahab and his wife were royally lodged, at all events, though they had little pleasure of their grand home.

In 854 Ahab, after long wars with Ben-hadad of Syria, made peace with his old enemy. You wonder why he did it, when he had the Syrian apparently in his power. It was because of the dread which both kings had of the coming of Shalmaneser of Assyria. Two barn-door cocks may strut and quarrel in their own yard, but when the hawk stoops above them the quarrel is forgotten in the imminence of a more deadly danger to both. A great alliance of the west and south was formed against Assyria. We should never have known of it, apart from the Assyrian annals, for the Bible does not mention it; but Shalmaneser has put down in business-like fashion not only the general fact, but the number of troops which each of the allies furnished to the allied army. Damascus came first on the roll, with 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalry, and 20,000 infantry. Hamath next, with 700 chariots, 700 cavalry, and 10,000 foot. Third comes Ahab, with 2,000 chariots, and 10,000 footmen. Egypt, now creeping far downhill, though still a name to conjure with, was intriguing in the background, as she always did in these days, and promising help.



AN ASSYRIAN KING'S AMUSEMENTS : LION-HUNTING ON HORSEBACK.

Isaiah knew his later Egypt well, and she was in his day as she was now. "Egypt," he said, "helpeth in vain and to no purpose ; therefore have I called her ' Rahab that sitteth still.' " Osorkon II. of Bubastis, who was the shadow-Pharaoh of the time, sent 1,000 men to the allied army, and that was all. Perhaps the army that met Shalmaneser at Karkar, in 854, may have mustered from 60,000 to 70,000 men. It was the utmost that six of the most powerful states of the old world could do when they were fighting for dear life against the most dreaded and deadly of all dangers ; and it shows how little confidence can be put in the enormous numbers which ancient historians gaily attach to armies which can never have numbered a tenth part of the totals they are credited with.

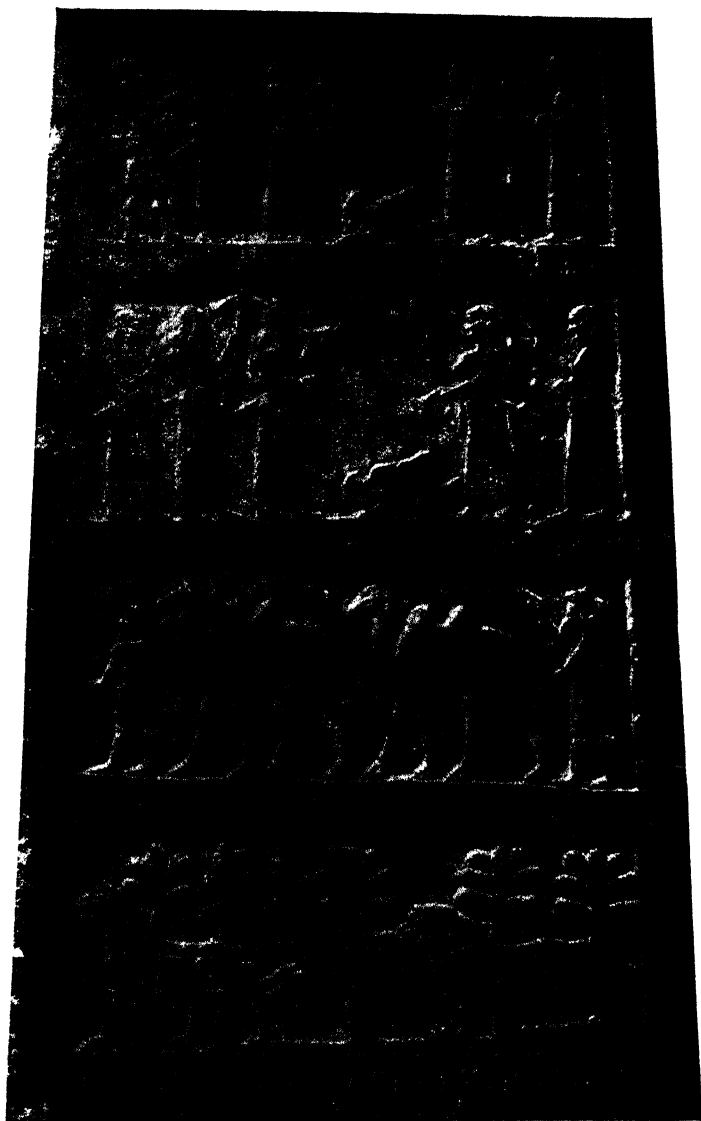
Large or small, it very nearly succeeded in defeating the invincible Assyrian army. Shalmaneser claims a complete victory, but the fact is that he narrowly escaped being beaten, and did not venture to return to the west for eight years. By that time Ahab had fallen gallantly at Ramoth-Gilead, the alliance had gone to pieces, and the task of the Assyrian was a comparatively easy one. None the less another alliance was got together, and Shalmaneser thought the danger so great that he called out every man that Assyria could muster, and put 120,000 men in the field for his campaign of 846 B.C.

Kings came and went swiftly in Israel and its neighbouring countries in those days, and when Shalmaneser made another appearance in the west, in 842, Jehu had wiped out the last remnant of the house of Omri, and was sitting on the bloodstained throne of Israel. His seat was none too secure, ruthless soldier though he was, and he

deemed it best to make alliance with the Assyrian, rather than with his natural allies among the western kings. And so you can still see on Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk in the British Museum the usurping King of Israel bowing down to the ground before his Assyrian ally, while his tribute is borne behind him by a group of Israelites. The inscription describes the scene as "the tribute of Jehu of the House of Omri, silver, gold, bowls of gold, chalices of gold, cups of gold, pails of gold, lead, sceptres for the hand of the king, spear-shafts." How much the Assyrian cared to know of the nations which he was trampling under foot you may judge from his describing Jehu as "of the House of Omri"—the very house which Jehu had wiped out in blood!

Jehu remained faithful to his new overlord when Shalmaneser again appeared in the west and attacked Damascus, then under Hazael. The Assyrian beat the Syrian king in the field, but could not capture Damascus, and had to retire with his purpose unaccomplished. As soon as his back was turned, Hazael took vengeance upon the state which, as he not unnaturally thought, had deserted him in the very moment when he was fighting against the common enemy. Had Israel supported him, Assyria might have ceased to be a constant threat. We need not wonder that Hazael was bitter against the man who had robbed him of the greatest chance of his life, nor that he treated Israel with a heavy hand. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel," says 2 Kings, "and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael, king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad, the son of Hazael, all their days . . . neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz (son of Jehu) but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing."

A soldier-state like Assyria is always subject to periods of decline, in which her strength has been worn out by her very successes, and she has to take a generation or two to recover. Such a time came now for Assyria, and it is a century before we find another of those terrible men of blood and iron, whom she periodically produced, arising to lead her armies into the west again. This time it was another Tiglath-Pileser, the third of the name. He was a usurper, like so many of the greatest of the Assyrian soldier-kings, and he soon made the name of his country as much a thing of dread as ever it had been. Babylonia seemed to offer him an easy prey, and soon he had swept over the ancient kingdom, and was proclaimed king in Babylon itself, taking the name of Pulu or Pul, as Babylonian ruler. And that is why you read in the Second Book of Kings: "Pul, the king



CONQUERED KINGS "SMELLING THE GROUND" BEFORE SHALMANESER
OF ASSYRIA.

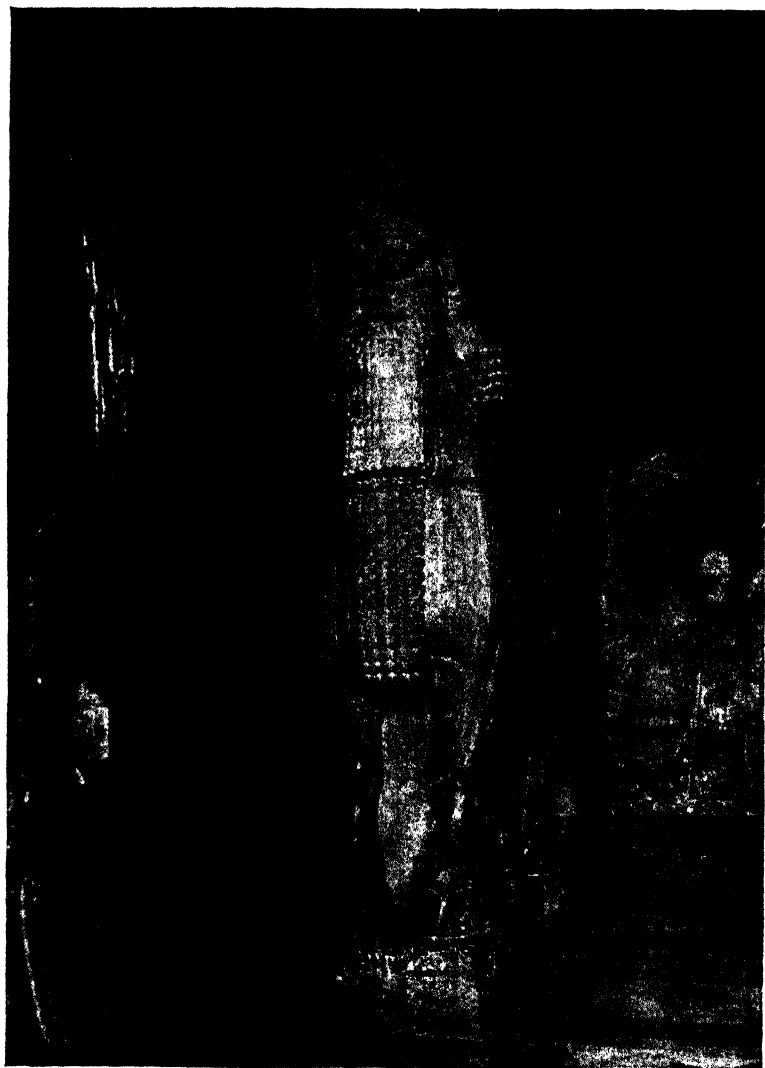
Jehu of Israel is the bending figure in the second row.

of Assyria, came against the land " (of Israel) ; " and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand," Menahem having usurped the succession from another usurper, Shallum, who had reigned but one brief month.

The northern kingdom was now hastening to its fall ; but one of Menahem's successors, Pekah, the son of Remaliah, another usurper, had sufficient energy to form with Rezin, King of Syria, the conspiracy against his neighbour King Ahaz of Judah, which led to his own downfall, and brought Assyria once more upon the scene, giving her a right to interfere in the affairs of Judah, which hitherto she had left pretty much alone. Terrified by the alliance of Israel and Syria against him, Ahaz, in spite of the warnings of Isaiah against his policy, sent ambassadors to Tiglath-Pileser, beseeching his help. The Assyrian king at once snatched at the chance of interfering again in the west at the request of a new ally, and soon rid Ahaz of his enemies. But the King of Judah had done a fatal thing in thus giving the northern tiger a pretext for meddling in the affairs of Palestine, and from this time onwards, until Assyria fell, the little country was never to be free from the blighting shadow of the robber nation.

Ere long the last King of Israel, Hoshea, rebelled against his overlord, Shalmaneser V., Shabaka, the Ethiopian Pharaoh of Egypt, being the evil genius who prompted him to so mad an act. Shalmaneser at once marched upon Samaria, and though the city held out for three years even against the terrible Assyrian siege-train, and Shalmaneser himself died before it was captured, his successor, Sargon, completed the work, and the kingdom of Israel was finally wiped out of the list of nations. Henceforth little Judah, all that was left of the once flourishing kingdom of David and Solomon, lay bare to the attack of the dreaded foe of all the western nations, and men learned by sore experience how much wiser Isaiah had been than Ahaz and all his counsellors when he warned them against dealings with so dangerous an ally.

Sargon marched home from his triumph, and out of the Bible story, where he is only mentioned once, mighty conqueror though he was. At home he built for himself a new capital, which he called by his own name, Dur-Sharrukin—"Sargon-Burgh." In the swiftly flowing tide of the history of those times he and his short-lived capital were soon swept into oblivion, and, until the middle of the nineteenth century, nothing was known of either the one or the other, and scholars doubted whether Isaiah had not blundered in mentioning the name of



WINGED MAN-HEADED BULL.
Doorway guardian from Sargon's palace at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad).

a king who seemed never to have existed. Then, in 1842, Paul Emil Botta, French consul at Mosul, began to dig in the mound of Khorsabad, and soon the whole world was marvelling at the disclosure of a complete Assyrian royal palace, with its endless succession of great halls lined with sculptured slabs depicting all the horrors of Assyrian warfare, and the fierce joys of the chase, its mighty guardian genii, who stood at the doors in the form of winged and human-headed lions and bulls, and its surrounding royal city. Sargon-Burgh, at its completion, may have held anything up to 80,000 people—a noble monument to the glory of the man who had led Assyria to the very pinnacle of her glory, had destroyed Israel, humbled Armenia and Babylon, and crushed the ancient pride of Egypt at the battle of Raphia.

But Sargon, mighty conqueror though he was, is mainly interesting to us to-day because he was the father of Sennacherib, and Sennacherib is, of course, the Assyrian king of whom everybody knows more or less (generally less) ever since Byron wrote his famous lines, so familiar now that I believe some folks imagine that they are from the Bible, which tell us how

" The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold ;
And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea,
Where the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

A magnificent picture of the gorgeous Assyrian wild beast's approach ; but one that does not tell us a great deal under all its fine sounding music, and that suggests much that is not in accordance with the facts. How the Assyrian really came down, why he came, why he went back, and what he did after he had gone home again, we shall see in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"THE ASSYRIAN CAME DOWN LIKE A WOLF ON THE FOLD."—II

ROYAL cities called by the name of the king who built them were somehow not lucky in Assyria. Kar-Tukulti-Enurta, as we have seen, witnessed the murder of Tukulti-Enurta, its founder, by one of his own sons. And now Sargon-Burgh had only housed its creator for a short time when he marched out against a petty little land on his eastern frontier. How it all befell no one knows, but the camp of the mighty soldier was stormed, probably in a night attack, and he himself fell in the confused struggle, no man can tell how.

"His Fall was destin'd to a barren Strand,
A petty Fortress, and a dubious Hand;
He left the Name, at which the World grew pale,
To point a Moral, or adorn a Tale."

Sennacherib, who had been regent for his father in the old capital of Kalah, found his hands full from the very start of his reign. Such an unprecedented thing as the defeat and death of an Assyrian king in battle needed explanation, and when Sennacherib asked of his priests what was needed to cleanse the sin which must have brought about his father's overthrow, he had to pay dearly—elaborate penitential services had to be gone through, a new image of the god Ashur set up, and the temples everywhere restored. Sennacherib never forgave the priests for the mean way in which they had taken advantage of his sorrow, and, though he paid the bill, he gave them the cold shoulder henceforth.

That was the least of his troubles. The news of Sargon's defeat and death had spread like wildfire among all the states of the Near East, and the vassal kings began to revolt on every hand. Hezekiah of Judah had succeeded Ahaz, and had from the start been restive with regard to the Assyrian suzerainty. Egypt, in the background, was perpetually intriguing and inciting the kings of Palestine and Syria to rebel, and the ancient fame of the Land of the Nile still blinded the eyes of the Jewish king's advisers to the fact that Egypt was now

decrepit and worn-out—absolutely useless as an ally against a power so swift and ruthless as Assyria. Isaiah saw the truth with perfect clearness. "Woe to the rebellious children," he cried, "that walk to go down into Egypt . . . to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. For Egypt helpeth in vain and to no purpose. . . . Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong." The Assyrians knew it thoroughly. "Now behold," cried Sennacherib's political officer, the Rab-shakeh, as he stood before the walls of Jerusalem, "thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which, if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, unto all that trust on him."

But Hezekiah and his wise men trusted in their own wisdom, and paid no heed to Isaiah and his gloomy forebodings. This was a chance not to be missed, with the Assyrian already beaten and broken-spirited, and the Egyptian Pharaoh ready to back one up against the tyrant. Now was the time to break the yoke which Ahaz had foolishly put on his own neck.

Judah defied Assyria openly, and half a dozen other small states followed her example. Away in Babylon, Merodach-Baladan, a stubborn warrior who was to be a thorn in the flesh of Assyria for many a day, was making trouble, and sending embassies to the west to stir up more. Tyre rebelled, Ekron rose and handed over the pro-Assyrian king, Padi, to Hezekiah for safe keeping; Ashdod followed her example—and indeed the whole Assyrian Empire seemed on the point of going up in flame. We have always been in the habit of reading the story of Sennacherib's attack upon Judah from the point of view of the Hebrews who had to meet it; but when you read it from the other side, you see that Sennacherib had some reason for his annoyance with Hezekiah, who had really broken his solemn oath. Assyria was not blameless, but she had a real excuse for feeling savage on this occasion.

Sennacherib, however, was in no particular hurry to deal with the western revolt. He knew and despised the kind of thing he would meet with there—a handful of quarrelling and jealous little states who could never hold together even against the most hated of enemies long enough to put up a decent fight—with a broken-down old witch of the Nile behind them all, powerful in bragging, but helpless when it came to blows. The real danger was in Babylon, with the tireless Merodach-Baladan to make mischief. Into Babylon he marched, and

handed over the rule of it to his younger brother. In two years the Assyrian prince was driven out again, and Merodach-Baladan reigned for six months, until Sennacherib snuffed out his pretensions once more, and set a nominee of his own on the throne. His back was scarcely turned before his friend made common cause with Merodach-Baladan, whose persistence was amazing. Back came Sennacherib again, and drove the stubborn old rebel to take refuge, with his gods and the bones of his ancestors, in an island of the Persian Gulf. Then the Assyrian king resolved to be done with these endless revolts, and set his own eldest son, Ashur-nadin-shum, on the Babylonian throne.

He might think he was done with trouble in Babylon now, but he was bitterly mistaken. In less than five years the King of Elam came down from his mountains, massacred right and left in Babylonia, captured Ashur-nadin-shum, and carried him off to Susa to meet the kind of fate which Assyria had meted out to so many kings in the past. This time Sennacherib was thoroughly roused, and looking at all the facts one does not wonder. "He called upon his gods, and they came to his aid. Like a lion he raged, and put on his cuirass; with a helmet, the sign of war, he covered his head. In his splendid war-chariot which overthrows the enemy, in the anger of his heart he drove furiously. The mighty bow which Ashur had entrusted to him he grasped in his hand, the javelin which destroys life he seized in his fist. Against all the wicked enemy like a storm he raged, and like Adad (the storm-god) he thundered. By order of Ashur he attacked on front and on flank, like the onset of a terrible storm. The troops of the enemy he cut off with bow and arrow, through the mass of their corpses he cut his way as if splitting it open. Humbanhaltash, the *nagîr* of the King of Elam, energetic and careful, the leader of his troops and his great confidence, whose girdle-dagger was inlaid with gold, and whose arms were encircled with double bracelets of pure gold, Sennacherib quickly cut down like a fat steer hobbled with chains; their necks he cut as if they had been wild animals, their dear lives he divided in two like a cord. Like a heavy rain-storm, their trophies and their arms he scattered over the broad field, the prancing steeds in the clotted blood of the slain swam as in a river. On the wheels of his battle-chariot, which overthrows both good and bad, blood and filth dropped down. With the corpses of their warriors, like herbs he filled the field, like seeds of ripe cucumbers he cut off their hands. . . . The fury of his battle overwhelmed like a wild bull that Humbanimena, King of Elam, with the King of Babylon, and the

Chaldean princes who had come to his support ; their tents they abandoned, and to save their lives they trampled upon the bodies of their troops and took to flight ; like captive young birds their hearts failed. He bade his horses and chariots to pursue after them, and in the place where they were taken, there they were run through with the sword."

That is an Assyrian battle-picture drawn by the hand of Sennacherib's own scribe. There were people in the Eastern world, you see, who could write fine flaming history as well as the Hebrew historians ; and I must confess that one's sympathy is with Sennacherib in his desperate struggle against enemies on every hand. All the same the victory was not as decisive as this fine story would make out, and it cost the king two years more of hard fighting before Babylon fell, for perhaps the twentieth time, before the Assyrian arms.

Sennacherib resolved that it should be for the last time. He had treated Babylon with unusual patience—unusual, that is, for an Assyrian king ; and she had paid him back again and again with rebellion and ingratitude. Now at last she had cost him his eldest son, the heir to his throne. I don't think we need wonder that Sennacherib thought that he did well to be angry, however much we may regret the shape that his anger took.

He made up his mind to destroy Babylon altogether and for ever. Nevermore should that faithless city break its plighted word to any king, for it should cease to exist. Knowing what we know of the immense size of the ancient queen of the East, we can only wonder at the tremendous feat of destruction which followed. Even with all the destructive power of modern explosives we have learned how difficult, how almost impossible it is to wipe out absolutely even a small city, let alone one of the greatest of all time ; and Sennacherib's engineers had nothing but pick and hammer, fire and battering-ram, to help them. But with these, and indomitable persistence, the thing was done. " Every house in the city was destroyed from foundation to roof and fired. The inner and outer walls, the temples and temple towers were torn down and thrown into the Arahtu, canals were dug through the site, the city was overwhelmed with water, the brick-work foundations were scattered more than if they had suffered from an inundation, the site was annihilated as if a swamp ; in future days none might find ground of the city, the temples, or the gods."

So thoroughly was the work of destruction done that when Nebuchadnezzar once more made Babylon the mistress of the ancient world, he had practically a clear field for his rebuilding, and could

say, with perfect truth, when his mighty work was done: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" When the German expedition in the last years before the Great War patiently excavated the huge mounds which mark the site of the greatest of all the cities of the old world, they found scarcely a trace of the Babylon of the really ancient days. In one or two places, when they had gone down deep they came upon scanty relics of the Babylon of King Hammurabi's and Abraham's time; but nearly the whole of the vast circuit of walls, temples, palaces, and stately streets was the work of the great king who swept away the last of the house of David into captivity, and blotted out Jerusalem almost as thoroughly as Sennacherib had blotted out Babylon.

Meanwhile he had not been neglecting the western rebels, and though I have told the story of his dealings with Babylon to the end for the sake of clearness, his attack on the west really came before the completion of his stern work at Babylon.

It was in 701 B.C. that he marched westwards, to put to the test the new alliance between Philistines, Israelites, and Phœnicians, with Egypt behind them, on which Palestine was building such hopes. All the little states were sure that the time for their deliverance had come. One man in Judah saw the truth, and warned them all that instead of deliverance they were courting destruction. Philistia thought that because Sargon was dead Assyria's day was done. "Rejoice not," cried Isaiah to the Philistines, "because the rod which smote thee is broken, for from the serpent's root shall come forth an asp, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. . . . Howl, O gate; cry, O city; let all Philistia faint; for there cometh a smoke from the north, in his ranks there is no straggler."

Soon the smoke was seen rising from the north, as Sennacherib passed through the Lebanon, burning and destroying. Then he was down on the sea-coast, setting his leaguer around Tyre, after sweeping over Sidon and Zarephath, where Elijah had once dwelt with the widow woman. Luli of Tyre fled for his life to Cyprus, well knowing what he had to expect at Assyrian hands if he were captured with his city. Sennacherib has left us a picture of the flight, the Tyrian biremes, with their sinister-looking rams, crowded with fleeing soldiers, and noble ladies deeply veiled. In one corner, with a grim touch of humour, the Assyrian artist has set a huge crab, which grips an unlucky fish in its claws—just as Sennacherib was gripping Tyre. Isaiah had no sympathy to spare for Tyre and Sidon—seats, both of them, of the hated Baal worship which had been so deadly to Israel. "Thou

shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon ; arise, pass over to Cyprus ; there also thou shalt find no rest. . . . Howl, ye ships of Tarshish ; for your strength is laid waste." Merodach-Baladan, the Chaldean, had been the evil genius of the little states on the one hand, as Pharaoh of Egypt on the other, stirring them up to rebel ; and where was the Chaldean now ? " Consider the land of the Chaldeans ; this people exists no more, since the Assyrians appointed it for the abode of wild beasts. They set up their siege-towers (the towers of the battering-ram) against them and overthrew their palaces and made it a ruin."

But Judah and Jerusalem, Isaiah felt, were a different story. They had been foolish, with their insincere plotting behind Assyria's back with Merodach-Baladan and Egypt ; but, after all, they were God's people, and, under Hezekiah, had been doing their best to serve Him. Egypt was going to be thoroughly beaten, and the folly of trusting in her would be seen. Judah would have to pay for her foolishness, but the worst should not befall her, and God Himself would save her, when human help was vain. " Now the Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." But God Himself should take the defence of Jerusalem into His own hands, when Egypt had failed. " As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem ; defending also He will deliver it, and passing over He will preserve it." The Assyrian in his might thought that all the world lay at his feet, to be dealt with as he chose ; but the time was coming when he should find that he had only been God's tool, and that he was needed no longer. " Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man ; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him : but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his stronghold for fear, and his princes shall be dismayed at the standard, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."

Events soon tested the truth of Isaiah's foresight. Sennacherib ignored Hezekiah's little hill-fortress in the meantime, and pressed on along the coast-road—the old war-road of the nations—to meet his chief enemy, Taharka, nephew of Shabaka, Pharaoh of Egypt, who was hurrying up to save his unlucky dupes, too late as usual. The two armies met at Eltekeh, on the Philistine Plain, and Isaiah's judgment on Egypt's helpfulness was completely justified. The Egyptians, under their Ethiopian leader, were absolutely routed, and

the rebel Philistine cities fell, one after another—Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, Askalon—into the hands of the victor, and were treated with the usual Assyrian gentleness. It was a poor look-out for Hezekiah and his unlucky counsellors, shivering already for fear on their hill-top, as they

“ Watched the swarthy cloud of dust
Rise fast along the sky,”

and knew that beneath that ominous cloud the merciless Assyrian troopers were looting and slaying with such horrors that death was merciful when it came at once.

The king and his mighty men were in a desperate taking. Houses were torn down to strengthen the walls of the city with their stones. But the most urgent need, in view of a probable siege, was to get control of the only water-supply of running water which Jerusalem possesses—the famous Virgin's Fountain, which lay outside of the walls, and was reached by the old shaft up which Joab and his men had once scrambled. It was hurriedly resolved to cut a tunnel through the rock by which the water of the fountain could be led into the Pool of Siloam within the walls, sealing up, at the same time, the open fountain itself, so that it could not be seen from outside the walls. “ So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water ? ” You can still see the Siloam tunnel, which they cut through the rock in those days of breathless haste, with its bungled meeting of the two gangs of tunnellers who were working from opposite ends, just as tunnellers work to-day, and its rude inscription in Old Hebrew characters, telling how the “ manner of the boring ” ended in the two parties being just about to pass each other without meeting, which would have ended in two entirely separate tunnels being driven through the rock, when a flaw in the rock allowed the sound of the picks to reach the ears of both parties, and they broke through the rock barrier which separated them, and finished the job—in a clumsy way, it is true, but at least so that the water could flow through the tunnel, as it still does. “ And on the day of the boring, the hewers struck, each to meet his fellow, pick against pick ; then went the water from the spring to the pool for two hundred and a thousand cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the hewers.”

To all appearance they were none too soon. Free now from any fear of Egypt, Sennacherib turned to deal with Hezekiah. His main

army wasted all the country round about the capital, until at last Hezekiah, in despair, was reduced to send an embassy to beg for terms. Here is Sennacherib's own account of how he dealt with the rebel Hebrew. "But as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 of his strong walled cities, and the smaller cities round about them, without number, by the battering of rams, and the attack of war-engines, by making breaches through, and the use of axes, I besieged and captured. Two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, sheep, camels, and cattle without number, I brought forth from their midst and reckoned as spoil. Hezekiah himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up fortifications against him, and whoever came out of the gates of his city I punished. . . . Hezekiah himself was overwhelmed by the fear of the brilliancy of my lordship, and the Arabians and faithful soldiers whom he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, deserted him. Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones, large pieces of lapis lazuli, couches of ivory, thrones of elephant skin and ivory, ivory, woods of every kind, a heavy treasure; and his daughters, his palace women, male and female singers, to Nineveh, my lordship's city, I caused to be brought after me, and he sent his ambassador to give tribute and to pay homage."

The Hebrew story is not quite so gushing, but it tells us much the same thing. "Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah did Sennacherib, king of Assyria, come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest upon me will I bear." How terrified were the king and his advisers we can see from the fact that to raise the gold which Sennacherib demanded, Hezekiah had to cut off the gold from the gates and pillars of the very temple itself—a bitter humiliation. The ambassadors of the Hebrew king found Sennacherib besieging Lachish, which he soon captured, and they succeeded in making terms; and so Jerusalem for the moment escaped.

Yet it might well seem that Isaiah's confident forecast of Jehovah's defence of His city had been but scantily fulfilled, for if Jerusalem had been spared a siege, she had been humbled to the very dust. But more was to come, and in the coming was to vindicate the great prophet's judgment. Finished with Lachish, which he plundered with a thoroughness of which he has left us a picture of great interest, he marched on to Libnah, and heard there that the Egyptians were

hurrying up with a new army to save what remained of their allies. The Assyrian king marched at once to meet this new danger ; but he dared not leave so strong a fortress as Jerusalem unreduced on his flank, even although Hezekiah had professed submission. So he detached a brigade, with his political officer, Rab-shakeh, to demand the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem.

We all remember the scene : the Assyrian, braggart and boaster like the rest of his race, standing without the walls, and shouting his insults and defiance to the trembling king and council within, and mocking at them when they nervously asked him not to speak in Hebrew, which the soldiers on the wall could understand, but to use the Aramaic tongue, which was the language of diplomacy then, as French is now. Jerusalem cowered under the lash of the boaster's tongue, and shivered in fear, from her king to the humblest citizen. All but one man. Isaiah stood forth. Now, by his breach of agreement, Sennacherib, who had been in the right before, had put himself in the wrong, and Jehovah would see to it that his blasphemous pride was brought low. On the prophet's advice Hezekiah returned a bold defiance to the Assyrian diplomatist, and prepared, tremblingly enough no doubt, for the assault.

It never came. Far down on the sea-coast Sennacherib's main army met with some dreadful uncomprehended disaster, which cost it most of its strength. The great Assyrian king had to call in his brigade from Jerusalem, and to retreat at once to his native land, lest the remnant of his troops should be cut off. Jerusalem was saved, as Isaiah had foreseen, not by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit.

What was the destruction of Sennacherib's army ? The Hebrew historian tells us the fact plainly and briefly. " The angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand ; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." But with what means did " the angel of the Lord " do his dreadful work ? " You are not to imagine," as Dr. Johnson once said, with his usual common sense, " that the angel of the Lord went about and knocked each man on the head, or thrust a dagger into him." But an old story which Herodotus tells us throws some light on the disaster. He says that when the Assyrians had marched a large army against Egypt, the Egyptian soldiers refused to fight against their enemies. The Egyptian king besought the help of his god, who told him not to fear, for he himself would send helpers. And so it fell out, for an innumerable army of field mice poured in upon

the Assyrian camp by night, and gnawed to pieces all their bowstrings, the leather of their quivers, and the straps of their shields, so that when they awoke the next morning they were defenceless, and were slaughtered helplessly by the Egyptians.

Perhaps you think that this does not take us much further in explaining the disaster, but only makes it more unbelievable. But in these days we have learned that the terrible bubonic plague is carried by rats and mice more readily than by any other way ; and knowing that, we can see how both the Hebrew story and the strange tale of the Greek historian were all the time telling the truth, though in different ways. It was the plague, which, carried no doubt by its usual bearers, swept the camp of the Assyrian king with its poisoned breath.

"So," says the Book of Kings, "Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch, his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, smote him with the sword : and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead." Which is all quite true, only it did not happen just right upon the top of his disaster in Palestine, as you would imagine from the way it is put in the Bible. Many long and prosperous years were to pass over Sennacherib's head, after his bit of bad luck in the west, before the assassin's sword cut short a great king's life. He had a great work to do for his country still, misfortune or no misfortune ; and in particular he had to create the great city which stands in our minds for Assyria, just as Babylon does for Babylonia, or Thebes for Egypt. "He dwelt at Nineveh," says the Bible historian—but why ? For the previous capital of Assyria had been Ashur, or Kalah, Kar-Tukulti-Enurta, or Dur-Sharrukin—not Nineveh, which was no very great city, though ancient enough.

It was Sennacherib who made Nineveh into "that great city," at which the world wondered ; and how he did it, mainly after his disaster in Palestine, we shall see in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY : " ITS PALACE AND LIBRARY TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

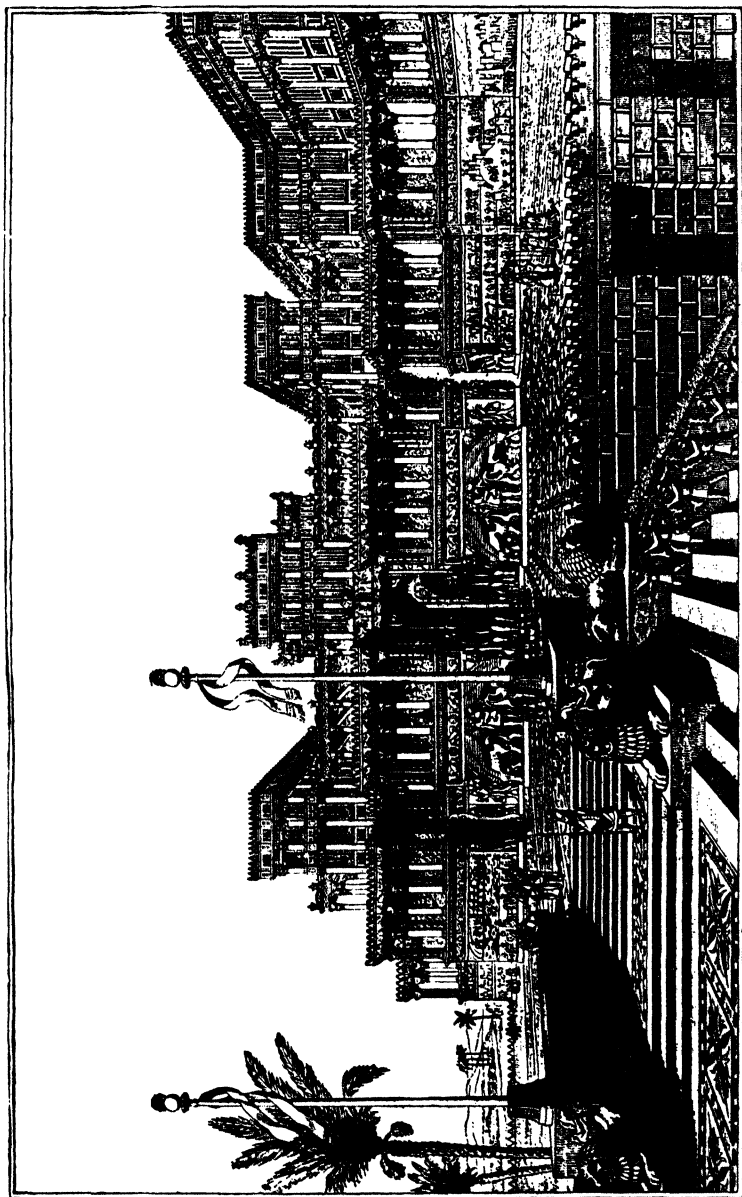
To most of us, I suppose, Assyria and Nineveh pretty much stand for one another, and we can hardly think of the country without thinking of the city. "That great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand"—that picture which closes the Book of Jonah is written on our minds, and whenever we read of a great Oriental city it comes up again, with its suggestion of the vast brooding mass of humanity, so ignorant, and yet all watched over by the God whom they did not know. It was the name of Nineveh that drew all the early excavators to the mounds by the Tigris, where the wrecks of Assyria's greatness lay buried. When Paul Emil Botta, the first in the field, sent home the account of his discoveries of the sculptured slabs and winged bulls of Assyria, he said : "I believe myself to be the first who has discovered sculptures which, with some reason, can be referred to the period when Nineveh was flourishing." But the mound of Khorsabad, where he was digging, covered not Nineveh, but the palace of Sargon, Dur-Sharrukin, which was built just before Nineveh began to rise to its brief splendour. When Austen Henry Layard, the Englishman who followed the Frenchman's lead, published the astonishing story of his adventures among the mounds, he called the book *Nineveh and its Remains*. But his first discoveries, which take up much of the book, and which drew the eyes of the world upon his work, were made at Nimrud, and Nimrud covers the site of Kalah, not of Nineveh, and Kalah was the royal city of Ashurnasirpal, nearly two centuries before Nineveh rose to fame.

Nineveh was indeed a city of ancient renown, for in it stood the temple, Emashmash, of the most famous of Oriental goddesses, Ishtar. Away back in the very dawn of history, Shulgi, the old Sumerian king, had honoured the temple, and Hammurabi the Great had sent back to it one of its winged bulls which had been looted. Later, when Assyria was still only a vassal nation, King Tushratta of Mitanni had

taken the image of the great goddess, "Ishtar of Nineveh," out of her temple, and sent it down to Egypt that the goddess might heal the Golden Emperor, Amenhotep III., of his diseases. "May Ishtar, Lady of Heaven," he wrote, "protect my Brother and me! A hundred thousand years and great joy may this lady give to us both." But that was 700 years ago, and as Assyria rose in the world, her kings pretty much forgot the old city and its shrine, and preferred to find other capitals for themselves.

But now Sennacherib resolved to turn the ancient place into his own royal city, and he did it so thoroughly that ever since it has stood as the type-city of his land. He found it, he tells us, "a poor place," though so famous, and it was subject to periodical floods from the small tributary of the Tigris which ran through it, and which had undermined the foundations of the palace and of the city wall. Sennacherib began by demolishing altogether the old palace, and carrying out great works of damming and banking the stream, so that it was controlled and became no more a danger. Then, within the circuit of the new walls which were to be built, he raised a mighty platform of bitumen, "like a hill," on which the palace and other important buildings should stand. He has told us himself of the magnificence which was lavished upon his new abode. He speaks of doors of cedar and cypress, pine and pistachio wood, plated with silver and bronze, and bolted and barred with silver and copper, and ramparts and cornices decorated with lapis lazuli and other costly stones. Because Ashur and Ishtar loved him, he says, they revealed to him where to find the great cedar trees which were now growing scarcer and scarcer by reason of the perpetual demand for them. In the days of his fathers alabaster had been so precious that it was used to decorate the hilt of a sword; but now he had found a store of beautiful stone in the heart of Mount Amanus, and there was abundance for all his needs. Good use he made of it too, for the walls of his palace chambers were lined with slabs of the beautiful and easily wrought stone, which were sculptured with the most wonderful series of pictures of his wars and conquests, and his triumphs in the chase. To guard the doors, he caused to be carved huge winged and human-headed bulls and lions, and the great blocks were floated across the Tigris during the spring floods and set up at the gates of the palace, so that nothing evil could enter in.

One of the pictures in the palace represents the hauling into position of one of the winged bulls, and it is very interesting to compare it with the Egyptian picture, thirteen centuries older, of the moving of a colossal statue of a prince. Methods of working had not changed



SENNACHERIB'S PALACE AT NINEVEH.
Restoration by J. Fergusson.
(From Sir A. H. Layard's "Nineveh and Babylon.")

much in the interval, and Sennacherib's colossus was dragged along on its sledge in much the same way as the townsmen of Tahuti-hetep hauled his statue—with rejoicing, so he tells us—into its place. Inside the palace there were three great parts, one belonging to the administration, one to the servants of the great house, while the third held the private rooms of the harem. Two great halls were set apart for the audiences which Sennacherib gave to his subjects and to the ambassadors of foreign powers. They measured 150 feet and 108 feet long respectively, and both of them were 40 feet broad—magnificent rooms, which, however, still showed the narrowness in proportion to their length which always mars, to some extent, the proportions of an Assyrian hall. The smaller rooms in the palace numbered more than seventy, so far as they have been explored; but the palace has not been completely laid bare by any means. Altogether, with its towering height and its gorgeous and costly decorations, Sennacherib's palace must have been the most splendid of all Assyrian palaces, and well deserved the proud name which he gave to it—"Palace-that-hath-no-Rival." It must have far outshone the simple beauty of the palaces of the Pharaohs; and if, perhaps, all the gorgeousness and glitter had a touch of vulgarity about them, and savoured a little of the "new rich," we must remember that "new rich" was exactly what the Assyrian kings were, compared with the ancient monarchy of the Nile.

The city which surrounded this splendid royal house was worthy of its crown. It was girt by a double wall, built with unusual strength; for while the main body of the structure was of brick, the whole face, from foundation to battlement, was of limestone, so that the battering-rams of an enemy host would have tough work to do if they wished to make an impression. The walls rose to a height of 100 feet, and were 50 feet thick all round, except at the fifteen gates, where the thickness was 100 feet. The inner wall was given a proud name—"The-Wall-whose-Splendour-overthrows-the-Enemy," and its circuit was about 8 miles, enclosing an area of 1,800 acres. Great moats ran round both walls, and the danger of flooding in times when the Tigris and the Khusur were in spate was guarded against by a great system of dams and sluices. The name of the outer wall was "Wall-that-Terrifies-the-Enemy." Altogether, it has been calculated, Sennacherib's new Nineveh may have held about 300,000 people, and was perhaps two-thirds the size of ancient Rome, within the Aurelian wall.

It is a pleasure to turn from the sickening records of cruelty and

slaughter which make up so much of Assyrian story to Sennacherib's own account of all that he did for his new capital, and we can think none the worse of him for the evident pride which he takes in work which added nothing to his warlike glory, but only to the comfort of his subjects. The great soldier had thoroughly modern ideas as to the necessity of a good water-supply for a city. The citizens of ancient Nineveh had been content, like Orientals even to-day, with the most primitive water-supplies and conveniences. Either they dipped up the muddy water of the Tigris in foul-smelling goatskins, or painfully drew up their supplies from old draw-wells. Sennacherib had seen or heard of the far better Egyptian way of the well-sweep—the *shaduf*, as the Egyptians call it—and he saw no reason why his people should not use a good thing, even if it came from an enemy land. "That daily water in abundance for irrigation might flow, levers of bronze and buckets of bronze I fashioned, and in the place of the draw-wells great beams and wooden frameworks over the well-shafts I erected." This was improving upon Egypt, and the fellah of to-day would be astounded if his rude *shaduf* were changed into Sennacherib's lordly contrivance, with its "levers of bronze and buckets of bronze."

Water-raising contrivances, however, are not much use if you have only bad water to raise. Sennacherib had his own ideas on that point too, and was not going to allow his city to depend on the brackish and foul water from the wells which had been polluted by the drainage of centuries. Far up among the hills, on the border of Armenia, he collected the waters of eighteen mountain streams into a reservoir, whence they flowed down by a canal into the city, their storage and distribution being so controlled by great sluices as to keep the supply constant at all seasons of the year. In the gorge of Bavian travellers can still read the inscription which tells us how the work was done. "To the great gods he prayed, and they heard his prayer, they directed the work of his hands. By valves and a tunnel the sluices opened of themselves and permitted the rich water to flow down; it needed not the strength of the sluice-people to open itself. According to the wishes of the god's heart, he dug the water, carried it from the stream, and directed its force. The gods who aided in the work were rewarded with great sacrifices, and the men who dug it were clothed in coloured garments and granted rings and bracelets." What would our modern city fathers say if they were asked to follow Sennacherib's example, and clothe their navvies in scarlet, and hang bracelets upon their brawny arms when an extension of the city water-works is completed?

I have told you so much about Assyrian barbarity and cruelty

that it is only fair that credit should be given to them and to their king when they show, as Sennacherib undoubtedly did at Nineveh, an enlightened spirit far in advance of the time, and a real wish for the comfort and well-being of the population of a great city. No doubt it was his own royal city for which he thus provided, and there was an element of selfishness in the creation of all this splendour and these gigantic works ; but at least 300,000 human beings had daily cause to bless Sennacherib for his forethought and his kindness. When we put against his account the cruelties of which his own sculptures give us only too sure evidence, and when we think of him as the tyrant who did all that his might could do to wreck little Judah, and would have done more had not the visible hand of God restrained him, we ought to remember also that it was he who led down the mountain streams to supply those " six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand," and the dumb beasts whom God did not forget in his account of " that great city." If what Sennacherib did at a score of places was hateful to God, surely what he did at Nineveh for helpless human beings and dumb creatures was not less pleasing to the God who " made and loveth all."

The great king showed a taste for books as well as for splendour. Sargon, his father, usurping soldier though he was, had begun the gathering of a library, and Sennacherib continued the work. Some of the old books in the ancient speech of the long-vanished Sumerian race still bear his library mark, and show us that he could read, or at least cared for the literature of another race than his own. But, like other kings of his nation, he was not destined to have much leisure for reading, or for the enjoyment of the magnificent palace and city which he had reared. It cannot have been very long after the completion of his work at Nineveh that his sons conspired against him, and the great soldier who had faced death on so many battlefields met it at last in the temple of his god.

His son Esarhaddon, who succeeded him, undid the part of his father's work which had sprung from the passion of revenge, and restored Babylon to some extent, though the old Queen of the Euphrates did not rise to her full glory for some time yet. It was Esarhaddon, also, who at last found Egypt's constant policy of pin-pricks too much for his patience, and marched his army down across the desert to cut the tap-root of the intrigue which had been making mischief for Assyria during reign after reign. In 674 B.C. he crossed the Egyptian frontier, only to be driven out next year. But the Assyrian was nothing if not stubborn, and after two years of preparation Esar-

haddon came back again with an army before which the Ethiopian Pharaoh could do nothing. Memphis, the most ancient of Egyptian capitals, was stormed and sacked, and the king, on his return, set up a tablet by the side of those tablets at the Dog River in Syria, in which the Egyptian Pharaohs of earlier days recorded their conquests. Esarhaddon's tablet ironically shows him holding a double cord, whose ends are attached to rings which go through the lips of two tiny captive figures, King Ba'al of Tyre and the Pharaoh Taharka of Egypt. Times had changed since Thothmes III. recorded the tribute of the “great chief of Assur”!

Taharka was not done with, and on his revolt, the very next year, Esarhaddon set out for Egypt again. He died on the march, and was succeeded by his son Ashurbanipal, with whom the glories of the Assyrian kingdom gather up into one last blaze of splendour before the darkness comes down. I am not going to tell you the weary story of the new king's wars, save to mention the fact that a final rebellion of Egypt brought him down again to the Nile valley, where he not only recaptured Memphis, but advanced up the Nile to Thebes, which he stormed and sacked with merciless thoroughness. The wonderful old Egyptian capital never recovered from the ruthless destruction which he and his fierce soldiery wrought, but gradually dwindled and died from that day.

But what I do wish to tell you before we close the savage story of Assyria's life as a robber-nation, is a little more about that royal library which we have seen Sennacherib carrying on as a legacy from his father Sargon. For again it is not fair to tell you about the ruthless wars and the brutal atrocities which these kings of Assyria were responsible for, without reminding you that there was another side to them as well, and that they were, in their own way, great patrons of literature and art. Sometimes, when you look at the pictures of ghastly cruelty which they had carved on the walls of their palaces, you are apt to wish that they had left art alone; but it is as well to remember that a man like King Ashurbanipal, who had himself represented reclining at a banquet with the severed head of his great enemy Tep-humban, King of Elam, hanging from a tree in front of him, that he might feast his eyes while he was feasting his palate, was also the collector of the great store of books which has taught us more than anything else about the life and the thoughts of the men of ancient times.

The discovery of this splendid library, like so many other discoveries in the early days of the resurrection of ancient Assyria, was made by Sir Austen Henry Layard. I wish it were possible to tell

you here the story of Layard's adventures during his digging out of the great mounds of Mesopotamia. No story of searching for buried treasure was ever more fascinating than his account of how he dodged all the opposition of Turkish pashas, cadis, and ulemas ; how, with six Arabs as his only helpers, he discovered two royal palaces in a single day at the mound of Nimrud, and how he turned the very captain of Bashi Bazouks, who was set to watch and hinder him, into a devoted friend. The tale of how the great winged figures of lions and bulls that now stand in the British Museum were first found, and then dug out and shifted to the side of the Tigris and rafted down the river, is one of the world's great romances—with the advantage of being all true. Nowadays you can buy his great books for a trifle that almost makes one ashamed, and they are far more interesting and infinitely more worth reading than ninety-nine out of every hundred adventure stories.

It was on his second campaign in Mesopotamia, in the spring of 1850, that Layard made the great discovery which has proved of far more value than that of any number of winged bulls or lions, however imposing these may be. He had shifted his diggers from Nimrud to the mound called Kouyunjik, and had got well into the heart of a splendid palace in the south-west part of the mound, which soon turned out to be that palace of Sennacherib about which we heard in last chapter. It was here that he found the priceless series of sculptured slabs which depict Sennacherib's campaign in Palestine against Hezekiah and his allies. You may go any day to the British Museum and see Sennacherib sitting on his throne and receiving the spoil of the city of Lachish, the very city which he was besieging when the Hebrew king sent his ambassadors to beg for mercy. If Layard had found nothing more than these wonderful pictures, his work would have been well repaid. As his workmen tunnelled through the ruins, they found out that not only Sennacherib, but also his grandson Ashurbanipal, had occupied the palace, and adorned it with sculptured slabs. But Ashurbanipal had done more than that, as was soon to be seen.

One morning the workmen struck upon a doorway opening into a small room. There was nothing very striking about the room, but the doorway was guarded by two colossal figures of a strange being, part man and part fish. Soon, close to the first doorway, they found another, also leading into a small room, and also guarded by two figures of the man-fish. Perhaps you may remember the legend which I told you at the beginning of our story, of the wonderful being called

Oannes, half man and half fish, who came up out of the Persian Gulf and taught the Babylonians letters and wisdom. Well, here was Oannes, four of him in fact, guarding doors which under such guardianship could scarcely be anything else but the doors into storehouses of wisdom. And so they proved to be, for when the rubbish was cleared away, the two rooms were found to be piled with thousands of clay tablets, which were written all over with the fine, beautiful, arrow-headed writing of the Assyrians and Babylonians. The tablets were of all kinds and sizes. The larger ones were flat, and measured about 9 inches long by 6½ wide—almost exactly the size of this book, in fact. The smaller ones were slightly convex, and some of them were only an inch long, and bore only a line or two of writing. The curious arrow-headed or wedge-shaped writing (cuneiform) was beautifully clear and sharp, but often so small that it could only be read with a magnifying-glass.

Originally, of course, all these thousands of tablets had been arranged in orderly fashion upon shelves, but what between fire and the ravages of many centuries, the shelving had collapsed and the whole mass was lying in confusion upon the floors of the rooms, some of the tablets almost crushed to powder, and most of them more or less broken, only a few being perfect. Half-destroyed as they were, however, and piled in seemingly hopeless disorder, they were the most precious find that excavation had ever made up to that time, for, when they were examined, it was found that among them were specimens of almost every branch of literature and science known to the Babylonians and Assyrians. For, while King Ashurbanipal was occupying his father's palace, he carried on the work of book-collecting which Sargon had begun, and not only gathered books in his own language, but employed scholars to translate for him Babylonian books of importance, so that he might have the wisdom of both lands gathered together in his library. Later on in his reign he built a new palace for himself, which lies at the north side of the mound of Kouyunjik, and while he adorned it with some of the most beautiful sculptured slabs that Assyria has left us, he did not forget the library, but gathered in the new palace another fine collection of clay books. Three years after Layard found the first library, his assistant, Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, found the second in the ruins of the north palace, and now the whole collection of some 30,000 tablets is one of the most precious treasures of the British Museum. It may not be so striking as the sculptured slabs, but it tells us even more about two of the most famous nations of the old world.

What kind of books, then, did Ashurbanipal gather on his bookshelves? Well, he had a taste for all sorts of reading, if we may judge by the books he possessed. First and foremost there was a great collection of books about religion, with treatises on foretelling the future, handbooks of astrology and astronomy, collections of omens, and books about dreams and their interpretation. (You remember how much stress all these old peoples laid on dreams—Pharaoh's dream, Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the like.) Then came another big batch of books dealing with what you might call half witchcraft and half medicine, and telling of all sorts of spells to drive out the demons who made disease in human bodies. Along with these hocus-pocus books went others which really taught sensible cures for disease—regular medical text-books, in fact. And, as disease and sin were always close together in the minds of ancient people there were books of penitential psalms, prayers, and hymns, to be said or sung so as to win the goodwill of the gods again. Then there were books containing all the old legends about the gods and heroes, some of which you have heard already, some of them written in poetry that even to-day we can feel the power of. And, not least, there were sign-lists and grammars and dictionaries of all sorts, which have proved of the utmost value in helping scholars to the interpretation of all the older forms of the languages of Mesopotamia and Babylonia.

Aladdin and *Ali Baba*, the *Gold Bug* and *Treasure Island*, are a very well in their own way; but there was never such a treasure-house opened to the whole world as when Layard and Rassam found their way into those small chambers in the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal. For these other treasure-seekers only tell us of gold and diamonds, which can belong but to a few, and do not often make even those few much happier; but the treasure-houses of the mound of Kouyunjik have given freely to all the world some of the treasures whose price is above rubies, and which cannot be bought for gold. Since Layard's day, tens of thousands of such tablets have come to light, and almost every expedition unearths some thousands more; but there has never been a find which taught us so much and so quickly as did the discovery of the library of King Ashurbanipal.

Perhaps the greatest and most wonderful thing that we have got out of the discovery of these old clay books is the glimpse into the minds of the men of ancient days that it has given us. Somehow it is tremendously hard to realize that people who lived and died forty or fifty centuries ago were folk just like ourselves. "Hath not a Jew eyes?" says Shylock, in *The Merchant of Venice*, to Salanio and

Salarino. "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" That is just what is so hard to believe about the men of the past.

When you see these astonishing and merciless sculptures of the Assyrian wars and hunts, when you watch the king whirling into battle with his bow bent and his arrow drawn to the head, and trampling down countless enemies under his feet or his chariot wheels, you seem to be in the presence of something more or less than human—cold, cruel, but otherwise passionless and inhuman. Ashurbanipal is something quite unlike yourself, and there is nothing that can bring you into the same world with him, or assure you that he is of the same flesh and blood, and of like passions with ourselves. But listen! Here is his own voice out of the past—the voice of an anxious, worried man, looking into the future, just as we try to look, and pleading with God for help, before he stakes his life and his kingdom on the hazard of the great battle with the might of Elam. "O Lady of Arbela" (he is praying to Ishtar of Arbela, one of the many forms of the great goddess), "I am Ashurbanipal, the King of Assyria, the creature of thy hands, called by the father who produced thee" (the god Ashur) "to renew the temples of Assyria and to build up the cities of Babylonia. In humility have I turned my thoughts towards thy holy places, anxious for the honour of thy godhead; whereas this vile Tep-Humban" (King of Elam), "who does not honour the gods, puts shame upon me. But I appeal to thee, thou goddess of goddesses, queen of battle, lady of battles, princess of the gods, to intercede for me with Ashur, the father who produced thee, for Tep-Humban has put his host in array for battle, and has gathered his weapons to proceed to Assyria. Thou, warrior among the gods, drive against him in the midst of battle, and destroy him by a mighty storm, an evil wind." The great king and warrior had his own worries before a battle, it seems, just like another man, and we get a little nearer to him by that.

So much for the king as a king. We next meet him as an anxious father worrying about the health of his little son. Here is his doctor's letter in answer to the king's anxious inquiries. "Arad-Nana to the King, my Lord, thy servant Arad-Nana. Heartly greetings to the King, my Lord. May Ninurta and Gula" (the healing god and goddess)

"grant happiness and health to the King, my Lord. Hearty greetings to the little chap whose eye causes him trouble. I put a bandage on his face. Yesterday evening I took off the bandage that had been applied, removing also the dressing below, and there was blood on the dressing as much as the point of the little finger. To whichever one of thy gods this is due, his command has surely been heeded. Hearty greetings. Let the King, my Lord, rest assured ; in seven days or eight the little chap will be well."

Come a little closer yet, and, behold ! the man of iron is suffering from "the rheumatics," just like anybody else, and his physician understands the case no better than physicians understand rheumatism still. "The King, my Lord, continues to declare, 'The state of this sickness of mine thou dost not recognize, thou dost not bring about a cure.' Now I confess that hitherto I did not understand this rheumatism, but now I seal this letter to send it to the King, my Lord. Let it be read to the King, my Lord, and properly understood. Let the king apply this liniment. If the King does this, the fever will soon leave the King, my Lord. A second and a third time this liniment should be applied to the King, my Lord. The King must see to this. If it please the King, let it be done in the morning. This disease is in the blood. Let them bring the King dried liquorice root liniment, and let it be vigorously rubbed in. I shall come to inform myself, and as soon as the perspiration flows freely from the King, my Lord, I shall send to the King, my Lord, something to apply to the King's neck. With a salve which I shall send the King, let the King be rubbed at the appointed time."

One hopes that the pains of the rheumatism abated under vigorous rubbing with the dried liquorice root. Now let us come a little closer still—

"For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently."

No, nor apparently a king of Assyria either, any more than the humblest youngster of to-day. The doctor goes on : "I will speak the truth with the King, as the King has demanded ; the pain in his head, his sides, and his feet, has come from his teeth—they must be extracted."

The next time you go to the British Museum, and see the great king storming over the battlefield in his gilded chariot, or furiously chasing the lion, into whose open jaws he thrusts his lance, and feel what long ages and infinite changes separate you from such a barbaric but superhuman figure, remember this other picture of him sitting by the

side of a very insufficient brazier in his royal but draughty palace, with his aching jaw clutched in his rheumatically hand, what time the royal physician towers aloft beside him and thunders: "The pain in the head of the King, my Lord, comes from his teeth; they must be extracted!" If that does not make you realize that a king of Assyria was a man of like passions with yourself, nothing else will.

Last of all comes something which should appeal to every one who has written in his or her books the old rhyme: "This book to So-and-so belongs"—and so on in any of its variants. When King Ashurbanipal gathered the thousands of clay books into his library at Nineveh, he did exactly the same thing as "the soaring human boy" (or girl) has done ever since. Sometimes he marks his books with nothing more than a brief docket: "Palace of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria." But sometimes we have the true challenging formula of possession at full length: "Palace of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria, who puts his trust in Ashur and Belit, whom Nabu and Tashmetum have given an open ear, who has acquired a bright eye, with the exquisite skill of the tablet writer, which none of the kings, my forefathers, had learned. . . . I have written on tablets that I may read it and learn it, and have laid it up in my palace. These are for the reading and learning of all who see them. Whosoever shall take them away or deface them, *or write his name in the place of my name*, may the gods curse him and root out his seed from the earth!" People who owned books, you see, were just like yourself, even though they might be mighty kings and conquerors.

So we take leave of Ashurbanipal, last of the great Assyrian kings, with his victories and his rheumatics, his triumphs and his toothache, feeling him to be a real human being, and perhaps not quite so much of a ruthless brute as he made himself out to be. Whatever he was, he was taken away from the evil to come, for it was not long before the eagles came flying from the ends of the earth to tear at the carcass of the dying Assyrian lion.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE TRIUMPH OF BABYLON

BABYLON begins the story of the Near East, and Babylon, you may say, ends it. Perhaps not absolutely, for even after the last word about Babylon is said, and Cyrus the Persian is sitting on the throne where once Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar sat, the old empire of Egypt still has a postscript to write, and the *Finis* is not put to the story until Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, crushes the last hope of Egypt at the battle of Pelusium. Then the old things pass away, and all becomes new. With Persia on the stage, we are near to the clash of East and West, to Marathon and Salamis and Platæa, and, ere long, to Alexander the Great. But once Persia has appeared, we are no longer dealing with the old world, but with the beginnings of a new one, in which the ancient kingdoms hover about for a little while like thin ghosts of the past, before they disappear altogether. The triumph of Babylon, under the two great kings who founded the short-lived new Babylonian Empire, is the last effort of the old world that we have known, within its own limits.

For seven centuries, at least, Babylon had been under the cloud. Once easily first, and unquestioned mistress of western Asia, she had fallen steadily lower and lower. Even when we last heard her voice claiming supremacy over Assyria ("The Assyrians, my vassals," wrote Burrauriash to Pharaoh), the Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit, who should lead his victorious troops into Babylon, was already sitting on the throne of Ashur. Since then, for 700 years, there had been no real recovery for the ancient Queen of the East. Strife between Babylon and Assyria had been almost as constant as the return of the seasons; and almost invariably Babylon had been worsted in the end. Now and again a gleam of success fell upon her banners, but it was always followed by disaster which wiped out, and more than wiped out, the memory of the triumph. Gradually the great empire of Babylonia shrank, until it was nothing more than the Babylonian plain immediately around the great city. Finally the Assyrian kings claimed the Babylonian throne by right of conquest, and ruled, either

in person or by deputy, in Hammurabi's place. The last disaster which overtook the place was the revenge of Sennacherib for the revolt which had cost him his eldest son. Babylon, as we saw, was swept from the face of the map, and though Esarhaddon restored it to some extent, the ancient city was but a shadow of itself for two generations.

Meanwhile some shoots of the tough old tree which had yielded such a stubborn opponent of Assyria as Merodach-Baladan, had been reviving and growing to some purpose farther south and east, in what the Babylonians used to call the "Sea-Land," where the two great rivers run into the head of the Persian Gulf. The son of the last viceroy of the Sea-Land, under Assyria, was a certain Nabu-apal-usur, whom the Greeks called Nabopolassar, the name by which we know him best. While Ashurbanipal reigned, Nabopolassar was content to be, like his father, merely viceroy of his native land. But Ashurbanipal was followed by two weaklings, Ashur-etil-ilani and Sin-sharish-kun, and under their weak rule he had no difficulty in making himself king, first of the Sea-Land and then of Babylonia. By the year 616 B.C. he found himself strong enough to attempt the invasion of Assyria, and in his first campaign gained a considerable success against the old enemy. But the time was not yet ripe for complete victory. Assyria was weakening fast. Her gigantic effort against Egypt had been too much for her already overstrained strength, and there was to be no time allowed her for recovery on this occasion. Within a few years of the sack of Thebes, Egypt, under the clever and cautious Pharaoh, Psamtek, had revolted and regained her independence.

But Psamtek had no idea of seeing Babylon step into the place which Assyria could no longer fill. He knew that he could handle Assyria, but what a resurrected Babylon might mean he had no desire to find out. So he marched up hurriedly through Palestine as soon as he heard that Assyria had been invaded, and Nabopolassar retreated into his own land rather than face a new conflict with this formidable adversary. Next year, however, the Babylonian was back again, and laid siege to Ashur, the most ancient capital of Assyria. Again he was foiled, for Sin-sharish-kun mustered a great army, raised the siege, and forced Nabopolassar to retreat a second time. Things did not look promising for the Babylonian king.

But now an unexpected ally appeared upon the scene. The Assyrians had long been familiar with the wild tribes whom they sometimes called the Mannai, and later the Umman-Manda, but whom we know better as the Medes. One of their kings, whose name was Fravartish, but which the Greeks translated into Phraortes, indeed

attacked Assyria, but was defeated and slain in battle. But now the Medes had found a king whose uncouth name was Huvakh-shatara, but whom you will recognize better as Cyaxares, and who had drilled his wild tribesmen into an efficient army on the Assyrian model. By the time when Nabopolassar was beginning his second campaign against Assyria, Cyaxares was thinking of a similar venture himself, and attacked the frontiers of the old enemy.

In 614 B.C. he was back again, with a more serious attack, which resulted in the capture of Ashur, where Nabopolassar had failed the year before. The Babylonian king saw that he had now a most valuable ally, if he chose to make alliance with the Mede; but if not, a most dangerous rival. He chose alliance, and amid the ruins of the ancient capital of Assyria his son and general, Nebuchadnezzar, was married to the young Princess Amyitis, the granddaughter of Cyaxares. Against this double enemy the Assyrian army made a fight worthy of its ancient renown. More than once the attacking forces were defeated and forced to retreat for a while. But Assyria was exhausted, and while she grew weaker and weaker, the opposing hosts mustered always stronger and stronger.

At last, after three desperate battles, Sin-sharish-kun was driven back into Nineveh, and the final siege began. To-day there can still be traced among the ruins the place where the moat was filled up with masses of stone and brick that fell from the wall, as the rams made the breach practicable for the assault. How long the siege lasted we do not know, nor what was the exact date at which the great city fell. It may have been anything between 612 and 606 B.C. The great heaps of ashes, and the way in which the alabaster slabs in the royal palaces have been calcined by fire, show us what was the fate of the magnificent capital of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal, and legend tells us that when the Assyrian king saw that hope was gone, he piled up all his treasures into one vast funeral pyre, and threw himself into the blazing fire, and so perished. Nothing is more likely. Thirty years or so before, Sin-sharish-kun's uncle, Shamash-shum-ukin, the rebel viceroy of Babylonia, had made a similar flaming end, when his brother Ashurbanipal had beaten down the rebellion which he had led. Besides, how could Assyrian pride tolerate that the king of the mightiest empire of the world should be led in captivity, perhaps blinded or flayed, like any other king, so long as there was another road—albeit a fiery one—open to him?

With the resounding crash of the fall of Nineveh, the terror of Assyrian domination, which had lain like a nightmare upon the spirits

of all nations of the old world, finally departed. The work, indeed, was not entirely done when Nineveh fell, for there was still one noble of Assyria, bearing the historic and honourable name of Ashur-uballit, who refused to admit that Assyria could ever be beaten, and held out desperately for several years. It was during this last despairing struggle of the dying lion that the good king Josiah of Judah lost his life in the vain attempt to bar the way to Assyria's southern ally.

For Egypt, once more strangely allied, in the end of the days, with Assyria, was on the march again, to save, if it might be, the last fragments of Assyrian independence, and to check the ambition of Babylon. Pharaoh Necho, who had succeeded to the Egyptian throne in 600 B.C., appeared in Palestine with a great army, on his way to the Euphrates, meaning to help the surviving Assyrians, no doubt, but meaning still more to claim for Egypt the succession to Assyria which Babylon seemed to be seeking. Josiah, who had recently restored the purity and splendour of the Temple services, seems to have thought the moment favourable for asserting the independence of his little kingdom, and had no mind to see Egypt filling Assyria's place. With the paltry force which Judah could raise, he attempted to bar the Pharaoh's advance at the Pass of Megiddo—strategically the best position, no doubt, but historically an ominous place for men of his race to resist an Egyptian army. Necho, with unusual forbearance, besought the young Jewish king to yield him a passage, and not to risk certain overthrow. "What have I to do with thee, thou King of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war, for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not."

Perhaps it was kindly meant, as it sounds; but Josiah was too proud, or too intent upon his own dream of independence, to accept good and kindly advice. Of course there could only be one result to an encounter so unequal. The tiny army of Josiah was brushed aside, and he himself mortally wounded; and Necho swept on to the Euphrates, where his campaign, for the time, was successful. Returning in triumph, he deposed Jehoahaz, who had succeeded Josiah, and carried him down as a prisoner into Egypt, leaving the foolish and vicious Jehoiakim to reign in his stead. But Egypt's triumph was short-lived. Soon Nebuchadnezzar, acting for his father, beat down the last resistance of the Assyrians, and when Necho again marched up to the Euphrates to assert his claim to the ancient empire

of Thothmes III., he was met and utterly routed at Carchemish by the great Babylonian soldier.

The prophet Jeremiah has left us the most vivid of pictures of the proud advance of the Egyptian army and its humiliating overthrow. "Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof. Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow. For this is the day of the Lord God of Hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries. . . . Go up into Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land; for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are both fallen together." "Why are thy valiant men swept away? They stood not, because the Lord did drive them."

The Jewish historian sums up all the result of the confused strife in a single verse. "And the king of Egypt came not any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken, from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt."

So now the baleful light of Assyria, red with the flame of burning cities and towns, went out in darkness, and the two ancient powers of the old world, which had been sometimes friends, sometimes rivals, but always leaders in all the arts of civilization, for so many centuries, were left alone once more for a little while in a world which was spent and very weary. For the moment it was Babylon which was supreme, and no one knew how short was the time which was appointed for the glories of Nebuchadnezzar's empire to reach their height and pass away. But of one thing the whole world was aware, and over one thing it whole-heartedly rejoiced, with a joy that no forebodings about the future could cloud. Assyria was fallen—nothing could alter that! Nevermore should her terrible armies spread wasting and slaughter and torture throughout the earth. God had made an end of that, and nothing else that could come in its place could ever be so bad as what had been.

Listen to what the men who had seen Assyria at her work thought and said of her in the hour of her downfall. "The Lord will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. Cattle couch in her

midst, all manner of beasts, bitterns and pelicans roost on her pillars, owls hoot in her windows, ravens on her doorsteps. And this was the teeming city that sat so secure, that thought herself supreme, the only power ! What a ruin she lies, a lair for beasts ! Passers-by all hiss at her, and shake their fists."

Or read Nahum's picture of the last agony of the great city—one of the supreme things of ancient literature. "A shatterer has come up against you ! Man your ramparts, stand to attention, summon up your strength ! The shields of his heroes are crimson, the soldiers are clad in scarlet, his armoured chariots gleam like fire, and their horses prance at the muster ; his chariots tear through the open country, and gallop across the broad spaces, flashing like torches, darting like lightning ; then he masses the picked men, they charge ahead, they rush to the wall, and the mantlet is fixed ; the water-gates are forced, the palace is in panic, the queen is stripped and borne away, her ladies mourning like doves, and beating their breasts—and Nineveh lies like a pool of water, with her folk flowing from her : ' Stand fast, stand fast ! ' they cry, but none turns back.

"Loot the silver ! loot the gold ! No end to the plunder—treasures all untold ! She is desolate, dreary, drained : hearts are failing, knees are shaking, anguish settles on all loins, black fear on all faces.

"What has become of the lion's den, the lair of the young lions, whither the lion withdrew, and the whelps with none to scare them ? The lion who tore enough for his whelps, and strangled for his mates, till he filled his lairs with prey, his dens with mangled carcasses. ' I attack you,' says the Lord of Hosts, ' I send up your lair in flames, and the sword shall devour your cubs ; I will wipe your prey from the earth, and the threats of your envoys shall be heard no more.' . . .

"Draw water for your siege, strengthen your defences : down with you to the mud, trample the clay, all hands to the brick-mould. But there will the fire devour you, the sword will cut you down ! Multiply men like grasshoppers, multiply men like locusts, let your traders be more than the stars of the heaven ! yet locusts spread their wings, and your half-breeds are like locusts, your officers like grasshoppers, huddling in hedges when the day is cold, and flying when the sun is up, flying none knows where.

"Assyria, your rulers are asleep, your lords slumber in death ! Your people are scattered all over the hills, with none to rally them. You are shattered past repair, wounded to the death. All who are told of you clap their hands over you ; for whom have you not wronged unceasingly ? "

It seems almost horrible and indecent, does it not, when something so great and so magnificent was passing away from the earth in its death-struggles ? But remember, Nahum, and thousands of men like Nahum, had known what it was to crouch all their days in the dreadful shadow of all that splendour—never to know when their lives or their honour might not be sacrificed to add a little more to the bloodstained glories of Nineveh ; never to be able to call their souls, their loved ones, their homes their own. Can you wonder that when the splendour passed away, and the shadow with it, the whole world rejoiced with one accord ?

CHAPTER XL

“ IS NOT THIS GREAT BABYLON THAT I HAVE BUILT ? ”

FRESH from his victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar swept down through Palestine to the very gates of Egypt. But before he could cross the frontier, the news of his father's death at Babylon reached him, and he had to hurry home to make sure of his own coronation. Now he was the greatest man of the Ancient East that we have been watching. His allies, the Medes, were intent on other aims, and Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt were left for him to do with as he would. It was not long before his armies were obliged to show themselves again in Palestine. The foolish Jehoiakim, whom Necho of Egypt had placed upon the throne of David, shortly wearied of paying tribute to his new overlord, and, still believing in the help from Egypt which had deluded so many of his ancestors, and scorning the warnings of Jeremiah, set Babylon at defiance. Of course it was sheer madness. Jehoiakim himself died before the punishment of his folly came upon his land ; but his son Jehoiachin had to bear the brunt of the Babylonian king's anger. When the terrible army of his angry overlord gathered round Jerusalem, the young king came out and offered himself to save his city from siege and sack. It was an act of heroism which the Jewish people never forgot, and though it did not altogether accomplish its purpose, yet it saved Jerusalem from the horrors of slaughter and looting which would have been its doom. The Babylonian commander carried off the treasures of the Temple, the royal family, the nobles, the craftsmen, and the troops of Judah as prisoners, but the rest of the city and land was spared, and Jehoiachin's uncle, a young man of twenty-one, named Mattaniah, was made king over the remnant of the people, and renamed Zedekiah.

But the end of the kingdom of David was only put off for a little while. A new Pharaoh, Hophra (Apries), was reigning in Egypt, and was eager to win back the empire which his land had held a thousand years before. He invaded Palestine, and the Babylonian troops, which were stationed in the land to keep Zedekiah to his allegiance, retreated before him. Blinded by his own desires, the foolish king imagined

that Babylonia was done with, because its outposts had fallen back before superior force, and rebelled at once against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah warned him solemnly against his folly. "Behold," he said, "Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land, and the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city, and they shall take it and burn it with fire." Zedekiah would not listen, and the end came swiftly.

Nebuchadnezzar himself marched out with the Babylonian army to meet the ancient enemy, and before his advance the Egyptian army retreated into Egypt, without so much as risking a battle. Again, as in the past, Egypt had helped in vain and to no purpose, and now her unfortunate dupes were left to pay the price of their trust in her. The great king himself did not advance farther than the Lebanon district, whence he directed the long blockade of Tyre; but a detachment of his army under his general Nebuzaradan invested Jerusalem, and after a desperate resistance of eighteen months the city was starved into surrender. Zedekiah attempted to escape, but was captured and brought before the Babylonian king at his camp in the Lebanon. Nebuchadnezzar's tender mercies were not so cruel as those of an Assyrian king would have been, but they were cruel enough. Zedekiah's young sons were slain before his eyes, so that his last sight on earth might be one of anguish; then he was blinded, and led captive into Babylon. Jerusalem was looted, burned, and destroyed, and the remnant of the nation, saving those who fled to Egypt carrying with them the unwilling Jeremiah, was carried into the Babylonian Captivity. The throne of David had fallen, never to be set up again. From first to last the kingdom had lasted just 414 years (1000-586 B.C.)—a mere incident in the long history of Egypt and Babylonia. Yet, in its results for the world, it was the most important of all incidents in human history so far.

Nebuchadnezzar now pushed his empire westwards, until at last its frontiers met those of Lydia. Then, his hands at last free, he marched down to Egypt, to present the bill for all the mischief that the Pharaohs had made in Palestine and Syria. What success he had in the Nile valley we do not know, but the fact that a fortress called "Babylon" was built near the Pyramids seems to show that he left his mark on the land.

With the Egyptian campaign the great king's wars were over. Indeed he was now growing old, to say nothing of being worn with endless war-making. But he still had energy left to accomplish what must all along have been the great desire of his heart, to make

Babylon once more the greatest and most splendid city in the world. The Book of Daniel pictures him walking on his palace roof in the capital, and looking abroad on the vast city beneath him, and saying, in his pride: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" And no man had a better right to ask such a question. For the Babylon whose magnificence was a proverb throughout all the ancient world—the Babylon of the mighty walls, the hanging gardens, and the vast temple of Bel, the Babylon whose very name still signifies all that is great and gorgeous in the idea of a city—was entirely his creation.

In one sense the great king was lucky in that he had to begin practically from the beginning. The old Babylon of the great past, where Hammurabi had reigned, and the Hittites had raided, had been wiped from the face of the earth by Sennacherib. Esarhaddon had done what he could to restore it again, but there had neither been time nor opportunity for the growth of the city. Nebuchadnezzar was hampered by no questions of ancient palaces and temples which had to be respected in his rebuilding. He had a free hand, and could build the city of his dreams to his heart's desire. How he built it we have been learning, to some extent at least, within the last thirty years or so; but long before Dr. Koldewey's workmen put a spade into the mounds of Babil in 1899, the fame of his work had been spread abroad over all the world, until the imagination of mankind had piled up for itself another dream-city, more splendid than ever builder reared, and gilded with the light that never was on sea or land. The old Greek historian and romancer, Herodotus, had given us such a picture of a mighty city, with its vast walls, 53 miles in circumference, and so broad that a four-horse chariot could turn upon them; its hundred brazen gates, its huge temple of Belus, and its river-front with its quays and gates, that the most magnificent of realities might have found it hard to equal his glowing description. But the real Babylon which slowly came to light as the workers of the German Orient Society stripped away the mantle of earth which had covered it for twenty centuries, has proved to be not unworthy of the gorgeous picture of the old Greek historian, and has taught us that at least he had seen the things which he describes, even if they had grown a little in his imagination by the time he came to write down his recollections of them.

Babylon, no doubt, was not quite so big as he imagined, and, indeed, it seems as if in some cases he had taken what was the measure of the whole four sides of a building for that of one side only, so that

we have to divide his measures by four to get at the truth ; but in all other respects he is as truthful as one could reasonably expect, and some of what we used to think his wildest flights of fancy now appear sober realities.

The first thought of any ancient king in building a new capital was, of course, to make its walls as nearly impregnable as possible. How Nebuchadnezzar did this for Babylon we shall let our Greek tourist Herodotus tell us, for he saw the walls when they were still standing in all their grandeur. " In the first place, a moat, deep and wide, runs entirely round it ; next there is a wall, 50 royal cubits in breadth, and in height 200. . . . On the top of the walls, at the edges, they built houses of one storey, fronting one another, and they left a space between these buildings sufficient for turning a chariot with four horses. In the circumference of the wall there were a hundred gates, all of brass, as also are the posts and the lintels. . . . In this manner was Babylon encompassed with a wall." Then our keen-sighted Greek goes on to tell us how the river-front was walled on either bank, with a brazen gate and towers at the end of each street leading down to the river. And, as if all this were not enough, he informs us that another wall ran round the city within the outer one, and not much inferior to it in strength.

Impossible, of course—so everybody used to say, thinking that Herodotus had been drawing on his fancy, as travellers sometimes will. A wall 300 feet high and 75 feet thick, with a hundred brazen gates, never could have existed, except in imagination. Well, when Dr. Koldewey's workers came to dig out the outer wall of Babylon, they found that the only mistake that the Greek had made, seemingly, was that he had not made the wall thick enough. Instead of being 75 feet thick, the wall of Babylon was 85 feet ! Of course the brazen gates have long since vanished, carried off by looters, and we cannot tell what the height of the wall may have been ; but think of a wall broader than most of our important streets ! Surely its height must have been in proportion to its breadth, and perhaps Herodotus was not so far out after all. Even the "houses of one storey," which he saw on the wall, were found by the diggers, though our architects call them " cavalier towers," because they sit astride upon the battlements.

Right through the city, from the north wall to the south, ran the Sacred Way of Babylon, the " Procession Street "—surely the most magnificent and sumptuous piece of road-making that the world has ever seen. We think of the Romans as the great road-makers, and we are proud of our great modern motor roads, with their splendid

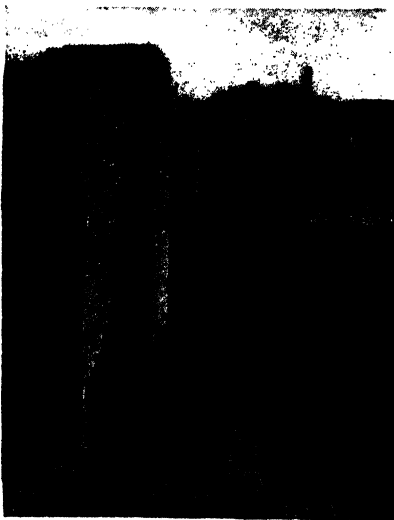
surface ; but our work, or the work of the Romans, is poor cheap stuff compared with the magnificence of Nebuchadnezzar's Procession Street. First there was laid a bed of solid brickwork, and then, above that, a thick covering of asphalt. Above the asphalt came the roadway, which was paved with blocks of fine white limestone, while the sidewalks were paved with blocks of red breccia, veined with white, so that the long street, running straight as an arrow through the city, must have looked like a gigantic ribbon of white edged with red. Each slab of stone bore on its edge an inscription, invisible, of course, once the slab was laid in its place, but still visible to the god to whom the prayer was addressed. " Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, am I. The Babel Street I paved with blocks of limestone " (or breccia, as the case might be), " for the Procession of the great Lord, Marduk. Marduk, Lord, grant eternal life ! "

On either side of this great artery of the city's life rose high defensive walls, nearly 23 feet thick, linking up the girdle walls of the city with those of the citadels within. The houses of the Ancient East, you must remember, show no windows to the street, so that these huge walls on either side of the street were no blanker than the house walls would have been. And thus you can see that this long street, though it led through the very heart of the city, offered no advantage to an enemy, even though he had forced the gates and gained entrance to it. He found himself in a perfect death-trap, through which he would have to struggle, pelted from above with arrows, stones, and fire by the defenders. Nebuchadnezzar was taking no chances with his defences, and however grand he made the streets of his city, his first thought was to make them defensible. The walls on each side of the street were decorated with long rows of lions, modelled in enamelled brick, and you can imagine what an impression was made on the mind of a stranger as he walked down the street between these long lines of threatening figures towards the great gate which crossed it just where the Citadel towered above the lesser buildings, holding within its huge walls the palace of the king.

This gate, the Ishtar Gate, still stands, to help us to understand the splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's mighty city. Two tall towers faced it on the north ; then came a passage-way lined with strong walls on either side, so that again an enemy who had forced the gate would find himself trapped ; then another pair of tall towers guarded the southern gate. The long lines of lions guarding the street having made their impression on the stranger, he was now faced with something still more impressive ; for the whole face of the wall of the

towers of the Ishtar Gate was covered with figures of bulls and dragons modelled once more in enamelled brick, chiefly white and yellow on a blue background. Five hundred and seventy-five of these strange figures faced the visitor as he gazed up at the frowning battlements which overhung him, and one can well imagine that by the time he had passed these guardians of the gate, he was like the Queen of Sheba, and had "no spirit left in him."

But the Ishtar Gate, splendid as it was, was but the preface to the unfolding of Babylon's glories.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BABYLON: TOWERS
OF THE ISHTAR GATE.

(Photo, Underwood and Co.)

Beyond it, there stood on one side the temple of the Great Mother Goddess of Babylon, Ninmakh. On the other side of the street rose the vast mass of the southern citadel, with the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. I need not lead you through all its rooms, but we pass through the noble courtyard, nearly 200 feet square, into the throne room, the stateliest chamber found in Babylon, 170 feet long by 55 feet broad. Its walls are decorated with a striking pattern of yellow columns with capitals of light blue on a background of dark blue. If we are to seek for a place for that grim revel before the slaughter, when "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords,

and drank wine before the thousand," and when "in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote," it must be in this great hall that we must find it. Belshazzar was never king, of course, but his feeble father, Nabonidus, left the government of Babylon almost entirely in his hands, and such a feast before the downfall was quite in accordance with Eastern notions of the fitting exit for a king.

Nebuchadnezzar himself has left us his own description of the great house which he made for himself in the days of his triumph. "In

those days I built the palace, the seat of my kingdom . . . in Babylon anew, laid its foundations on Earth's wide breast with bitumen and brick, mighty cedar trunks I brought from Lebanon, the bright forest, for its roofing. I caused it to be surrounded with a mighty wall of bitumen and brick. The royal command, the lordly injunction, I caused to go forth from it." So much splendour and power, with no rival in all the ancient world to dispute his mastery of it all : and now a mass of tumbled brickwork and a few coloured tiles are all that is left of the might and glory of the great king !

But Babylon was not to be great in its fortifications and its palaces alone. King Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most pious of men, though his gods may not have been ours. It is strange to think that we can read the very prayer which he offered to Marduk, his god, on the completion of the palace. Here it is, and it surely was not a bad man who offered such a prayer : " As my precious life do I love thy sublime appearance ! Outside of thy city Babylon, I have not chosen among all settlements any dwelling. Since I love the fear of thy godhead, and am zealous for thy rule, be gracious to my prayer, hear my call, for I am the King who adorns thy temple, who rejoices thy heart, the thoughtful governor who beautifies all thy abodes. At thy command, O Marduk, may the house that I have built endure for ever, may I be satisfied with its splendour, may I attain old age therein, with abundance of children, and receive therein tribute of the kings of all regions, from all mankind." The king whose god was so much in his heart was bound to do not less for Marduk than he had done for his own house. Solomon might take thirteen years to build his own palace, while he gave only seven to the building of the Temple of Jehovah ; but Nebuchadnezzar was not so grudging of his gifts to the god whom he served.

For a picture of the great temple which he reared to Bel-Marduk, the god of Babylon, we turn again to the old Greek globe-trotter, who saw it while it was still in its full splendour. " The precinct of Zeus Belus," he says—Bel being the same to his mind as the Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter—" was still in existence in my time, a square building of two stades on every side. In the midst of this precinct is built a solid tower of one stade both in length and breadth, and on this tower rose another, and another on that, to the number of eight. And an ascent to these is outside, running spirally round all the towers. And in the uppermost tower stands a spacious temple, and in this temple is placed, handsomely furnished, a large couch, and by its side a table of gold. . . . There is also another temple below, within the precinct

at Babylon ; in it is a large statue of Zeus seated, and near it is placed a large table of gold ; the throne and the step are also of gold."

Here, then, you see, as Herodotus saw, a great square enclosure, in the midst of which rises a huge stage tower, just like that which we saw at Ur of the Chaldees, only much bigger, rising to eight stages, instead of to four. Its eighth stage is a shrine, just like the fourth stage at Ur, and its furnishings are of gold. The stairway which leads you up the stages runs spirally round about the different stages—at least so Herodotus thought it did, but perhaps his memory may have failed him about this. Down below, in another part of the sacred enclosure, stands the real temple of the god, also splendidly furnished with golden throne, table, and all the other equipments needed for so great a god as Bel.

And now what did the German excavators find to answer to all this magnificence ? First of all they found, to the south of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, a huge square area, enclosed by a wall, and measuring about 1,330 feet on each side—almost as big as the sacred enclosure at Karnak, in Thebes. The wall which encloses it is double, and the space between the two walls was occupied by store-chambers, where all the furniture and vessels for the worship of the god were laid up when not in use. In the south-west angle of this great square there stands a vast tower, or rather the lowermost storey of a tower. It measures 300 feet on each side, and is built of solid brickwork ; a great stairway led up to it on the middle of its southern side. Plainly, this is just the lowest storey of the tower which Herodotus saw. The other stages have gradually vanished, perhaps partly destroyed in siege, perhaps just worn down by time and weather, as mud-brick always wears down. To begin with, the tower was, no doubt, as high as it was long and broad, and measured 300 feet every way. South of the enclosing wall stood the ruin of a great temple, 250 feet by 260, with a wide central court, open to the sky.

So you see the old Greek traveller was telling no more than the truth when he described the great temple of Marduk. Some things he didn't remember quite accurately, for the stairway does not seem to have wound spirally round the tower, though even that is not quite certain, and he placed the lower temple within the enclosure, whereas it is just outside of it ; but he remembered, on the whole, much better than most folks would have done, and there can be no question that he saw with a pair of very keen eyes the things which he took such pleasure in describing.

He told us, too, of a wonderful bridge, which had been built by a

great queen of Babylon in the middle of the city, across the Euphrates. It had great piers of stone, which were bound together with cramps of lead and iron, and from pier to pier was laid a wooden roadway, of which one section could be taken up at night, thus making the bridge into a drawbridge, and securing the city from danger of attack. Herodotus says that the queen made the drawbridge to prevent the good folks of Babylon from crossing at night to rob one another ; but I think that the Babylonians were too good business folk to need such a thing, and that the bridge had a drawbridge section as part of the city's defences. Well, we don't know anything about the wonderful queen who did all this, and I am afraid she only existed in imagination ; but the bridge was there all right—the very first bit of bridge-engineering that we know of, though it was built by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, and not by any queen. Dr. Koldewey and his workers found its seven piers still standing in the dry bed where the Euphrates once ran through the city. They are wide enough to have carried a roadway nearly 65 feet broad, and the whole length of the bridge was about 400 feet. You can still see the holes in the piers which once held the great beams that carried the wooden roadway. The piers are shaped like a ship, so as to make less resistance to the weight of the flooded river, just as a modern engineer would make them. The core of brickwork is all that is left now, but it is plain that they were once faced with stone, as Herodotus said. At the end of the bridge nearest to the Procession Street stood a strong gateway, with two tall towers, so that the bridge could only be crossed by those whom the guards passed.

Such was Babylon, as one of the keenest observers of the old world saw it when its splendours were still almost undimmed, though the glory of empire had left them ; and his glowing picture has been shown to be mainly a true one by the actual resurrection of the ruins of the great palaces and temples on which he gazed with wonder. You can well understand how, in the day of her triumph, when Nebuchadnezzar himself sat in his palace, or led his victorious troops up the Procession Street to give thanks for victory in the temple of Marduk, the city must have seemed a perfect miracle of glory and beauty. To the Jews of the Captivity, who walked in sad humiliation among the prisoners in the day of the great king's triumph, she must have seemed like the incarnation of " the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Many of them were conquered by the charm of the mighty city, but the hearts of the truest among the captive Hebrews still turned back with unquenchable longing to the little ruined

city that they had last seen blazing to the sky, and stripped bare by the fierce Babylonian troopers. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," they said, "let my right hand forget her cunning." And as they looked around upon the dazzling splendours of the Procession Street, their hearts leaped with the anticipation of the day when all these glories should be laid in the dust. "O daughter of Babylon," they said, "who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

The Hebrew was always a good hater, and to us his fierce joy in the thought of the ruin of all that wonder of greatness and beauty, however understandable, is without excuse; but he was not far out in his confident prediction of the coming downfall. Nebuchadnezzar little thought, as he surveyed from his palace roof the vast city that he had raised out of the dust, and asked the proud question, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" that within twenty-five years of his own death all the glory of his house would be laid low. But so it was, and even while he triumphed, and with good reason, in the work that he had done, there was training, in the highlands of Persia, the boy who, as Cyrus the Persian, was to bring to an end not only the pride of Babylon, but the whole order of the ancient world.

CHAPTER XLI

" THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH, YIELDING PLACE TO NEW "

ROUND the name of Nebuchadnezzar there grew up, as was natural, a plentiful crop of legends. The great king, who had changed Babylon, within the time of a single lifetime, from its miserably sunken condition into the wonder of the world, could not surely be like any ordinary man. Stories of all kinds grew up about him, of which you have several specimens in the Book of Daniel. It is curious that what seems the most unlikely of these tales, that of his temporary madness and restoration, seems also to be pretty near to the truth, so far as we can see. The king's own inscriptions speak of a four-year-long period during which his interest in public affairs was suspended, which looks remarkably like the time which the Book of Daniel describes with such vividness. The Hebrew writer seems to ascribe Nebuchadnezzar's piety to this terrible experience ; but we have seen already that the great king was always a pious man according to his own fashion, though the sore affliction which had fallen upon him may have made him still more so. His prayer to Marduk, on his accession to the throne, is the prayer of a sincerely religious man :

" Without thee, Lord, what could there be
For the king thou lovest, and dost call his name ?
Thou shalt bless his title, as thou wilt,
And unto him vouchsafe a path direct ;
I, the prince, obeying thee,
Am what thy hands have made ;
'Tis thou who art my creator,
Entrusting me with the rule of hosts of men.
According to thy mercy, Lord,
Which thou dost spread over all of them,
Turn into loving-kindness thy dread power,
And make to spring up in my heart
A reverence for thy divinity.
Give as thou thinkest best."

In spite of the great king's personal goodness, however, things were not fated to go well with the house which he had founded. Even

before his own death there were signs that the great military machine on which his empire rested was beginning to get out of order. There is still in existence a letter from an officer of high rank to another great official, in which he mentions that his own division has been falling off by desertion, and that he must take special steps to get the ranks filled up again, but is anxious that the state of affairs should not be made known to Gubaru, the commander-in-chief of the Babylonian army. As it was Gubaru (the Gobryas of Herodotus's story) who finally led the troops of Cyrus into Babylon, it looks as if he had known more than the officer wished him to know, and had himself deserted to the conqueror, seeing how hopeless it was to resist him.

The magic of Nebuchadnezzar's name held the state together as long as he lived, but his son, Amel-Marduk, the Evil-Merodach of Jeremiah, had neither his father's reputation nor the qualities which would have enabled him to do without such help. From what the prophet tells us of his kindness to King Jehoiachin of Judah, he seems to have been a merciful man, but all other accounts describe him as having neither order nor decency in his rule, and in a little more than two years he was assassinated, and one of Nebuchadnezzar's commanders against Jerusalem was made king in his place. Nergal-sharezer (Neriglissar) lasted little longer than Amel-Marduk, and when he died, after a four years' reign, his son, Labashi-Marduk, who was little more than a child, was assassinated after a reign of nine months. Now the priests of Marduk took things into their own hands, and appointed a nominee of their own to be king. Nabonidus, as the Greeks called him (his name was really Nabuna'id) proved to be just about as satisfactory as most priestly nominees have proved to be on the throne, and his very virtues, almost as much as his fecklessness, helped to bring about the downfall of Babylon.

The new king was one of the first-known specimens of that curious creature, the archæologist. He would have been admirable as president of a society for the restoration of ancient temples, but as King of Babylon in times of trouble he was quite out of his element. Most of his time was spent in hunting up the records of old religious customs, and he was never so happy as when he could restore some ruined temple, and, in doing so, come upon its old foundation stone, with the record of when it was laid. We have every reason to be grateful to him for his antiquarian tastes, for he has told us many things that we should not otherwise have known ; but his friends, the priests of Marduk, who had set him upon the throne, soon began to feel that he was carrying this sort of thing a little too far. It was all

right so long as he confined his restorations and gifts to temples of Marduk ; but when he began to wander away to Harran, or to Ur, and to waste his gifts on the moon-god there, or to send his daughter to be a priestess of Father Nannar at Ur, the priests began to think that piety had gone too far, and that it was time to look about for another king. Nabonidus had a grown-up son, Belshazzar, who had, indeed, really been acting as king during the time when his father was away digging up foundations at different temples all over the country, and Belshazzar seems to have had more pith in him than his feeble old father ; but the priests were tired of their former tool, and wanted to have no more to do with either him or any of his family. They had another king in view, who was soon to make his name famous over all the old world which he was destined to bring to an end.

While Babylon had been busy over squabbles about the succession, and Nabonidus had been rummaging among old records and tumble-down temples, a young man had been growing up in the little kingdom of Anshan, in South Persia. His name was Cyrus, and while his father was Cambyzes I., King of Anshan, his mother was Mandane, daughter of Astyages, King of the Medes, so that he was connected with both Medes and Persians, who were, of course, of much the same stock originally. King Astyages was none too sure of his young grandson, and an old story tells how he tried to have him done away with ; but the attempt failed, and the young King of Anshan soon headed a revolt against his grandfather, which was completely successful. Astyages was taken prisoner, and the Medes accepted Cyrus as their king, so that the headship of both Medes and Persians was now in his hands. Nabonidus was too busy restoring the moon-temple at Harran, or enjoying country life in Teima, 300 miles away across the desert from Babylon, to attend to these matters, which, had he known it, were vital to him and his kingdom.

Now that he had at his command all the resources of Persia and Media combined, Cyrus got on the move. His first attack was made against Lydia, where King Crœsus, in his capital Sardis, had become a by-word for wealth and good fortune. Crœsus, however, had been growing nervous about the advance of this new soldier-king, and sent to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi to ask what would happen in the event of a war with the Persians. He got the answer that if he went to war he would destroy a great kingdom. He did not realize that the answer had a double edge, and that the great kingdom might be his own ; and with perfect confidence, now that the god had spoken, he crossed the Halys and met Cyrus in battle near the ancient Hittite capital.

The battle was drawn, and Crœsus after a little drew back to Sardis, where he disbanded most of his army, thinking that the winter snows would check the advance of the Persians. Cyrus heard of this piece of folly, and at once pressed on to Sardis, where he easily routed the small force which was hurriedly got together to meet him in the field. Even now, Crœsus deemed his city impregnable, but one of the Persian mountaineers found a pathway up the rock on which Sardis stood, and king and capital were taken by surprise.

The Persian king had now the whole of northern Asia Minor in his hands, and whatever poor old Nabonidus may have thought, Belshazzar, at Babylon, must have been growing very anxious about what might happen next. He had not long to wait for information. Step by step the conqueror crept nearer to his prey, cutting off now this province, now that, from the helpless Babylonians. Gubaru, the former general of the Babylonian army, had evidently realized already that it was safest to come down on the Persian side of the fence, and was now acting as governor of one of Cyrus's newly acquired provinces, and leader of the Persian army. Belshazzar, who seems to have done his best to hold off the inevitable, led out the Babylonian army and fought one battle, in which he was disastrously defeated. Then the old king, wakening up too late to his duty, came back to his land and entered Babylon. But the time had passed for his presence to be of any use, and two days after his arrival the priests of Marduk again took things into their own hands, and the huge fortifications, which might have held off an invader for years, were handed over to Gubaru without a blow. Nabonidus fled for his life, but was captured and contemptuously appointed governor of one of the Persian provinces. Belshazzar was pursued, and apparently went down fighting, though of that we are not certain. Thus ignominiously, without even a decent fight for its honour, perished the great empire which Nebuchadnezzar had built up so short a time before.

Cyrus made a merciful use of his victory, so easily gained. One of the chief causes of the unpopularity and the downfall of poor fumbling old Nabonidus had been his mania for gathering the images of the different gods of the provinces of his empire into Babylon, thereby disgusting both the priests of Marduk, whose supremacy was thus threatened, and the people of the provinces, who were robbed of their local gods. Cyrus now reversed this policy, and sent the local gods back to their proper homes again—greatly to the delight of everybody. It was in the carrying out of this policy of restoring the local gods that he gave permission to the little handful of Hebrew exiles in

Babylon, who were zealous for the worship of their God, to return to Jerusalem and build there the house of their God which Nebuchadnezzar's army had destroyed. The great king little dreamed that it was by this obscure by-product of his general policy that he would be remembered through the ages, far more than by all his conquests ; yet so it has turned out to be, and for us Cyrus, with all his great qualities, still remains, and no doubt always will remain, the merciful king who was led by Jehovah to restore the Captivity of Judah.

So Babylon fell at last, never to rise again. The actual story of her fall, as we can read it now in the words of the man who brought it about, is curiously unromantic. The old legend which Herodotus heard, about the Persian besiegers diverting the Euphrates and wading up the river-bed into the midst of the sleeping city, would have been a far more satisfactory end for the great capital of the ancient world ; but it has to vanish before the unromantic truth, and take its place merely as a romance, and not history. Nor can we say anything about Daniel's tale of Belshazzar and the hand which disturbed his last feast, save that there was a Belshazzar, and that he was acting king, if not actual king, in Babylon before the end came. Of the manner of his death we know nothing, save that it was not in Babylon.

Once more, as in the case of Nineveh, though with less cause, the little nations around, who had been held in bondage by the great city, clapped their hands at the distress and overthrow of their tyrant. The triumph of Cyrus brought forth what is perhaps the most magnificent piece of taunting poetry in ancient literature, or, indeed, in any literature. No one who has read it will ever forget the mingled fire and pathos of that great fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, with its almost compassionate cry, " How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! " and its grim and eerie picture of the kings rousing themselves in the underworld to meet the fallen monarch of the world : " Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? art thou become like unto us ? " Indeed, there was reason, not perhaps for rejoicing, but at least for wonder and awe. For with the fall of Babylon one of the two great pillars of the ancient world crashed into ruin, and the whole fabric of ancient civilization rocked to its overthrow.

It was not long before the other pillar fell as Babylon had fallen. When the end of her old rival came in 539 B.C., Egypt had for some time

been enjoying her Indian summer, under the Pharaoh Amasis, last of the able kings of the Saite line. Psamtek, who had been the first to revive Egyptian prosperity after the Assyrian invasion, had owed his power to his employment of Greek mercenaries, with their bronze armour—the "brazen men from the sea" of whom the oracle had prophesied. His successors followed his example, and the Greek was firmly established in Egypt, both as merchant and as soldier, during the reign of Amasis. It was the Greek element in the Egyptian state that kept up the level of prosperity which Egypt attained in this last bright season of her long year, for the native element was degenerate and corrupt.

Such as she was, however, Egypt was the only state which stood between the Persians and the complete conquest of the ancient world. Cyrus, perhaps, did not contemplate an attack upon her; but he fell, obscurely, as Sargon had fallen, in a skirmish on a distant expedition in Bactria, and his half-mad son, Cambyses, was left to lead the attack on the last support of the old world. The odds were all on the side of the Persians. King Amasis, whose cleverness might have found a way out of Egypt's difficulties, died after a long and prosperous reign, and left his son, Psamtek III., an untried man, to meet the storm. Egypt's native army was no longer of any account, and though the Greeks, as they were to prove at no distant date, were more than a match even for the gallant Persians, they were, after all, only mercenaries, and mercenaries have always lain open to temptations to treachery.

It was treachery on the part of one of the Greek captains, Phanes of Halicarnassus, which now guided the Persian army across the desert to Pelusium, on the Egyptian frontier. Herodotus, himself a fellow-citizen of Phanes the traitor, tells us a wonderful fairy story of how the desert Arabs, on the advice of Phanes, were employed to supply the Persian host with water during their desert march, and did so by means of a triple pipe-line made of ox-hides. He had also heard, he tells us, a more credible story of how it was done—namely, that the sheikhs gathered all their camels, and loaded them with water-skins enough to supply the army. Perhaps this is more likely than that Arabs of 525 B.C. should have anticipated Allenby and the British engineers of the Great War.

Thus guided and supplied, the Persian army reached Pelusium, at the mouth of one of the branches of the Nile, where Psamtek III. lay awaiting their attack with his army, native and mercenary. Herodotus tells us a dreadful story of what took place before the two hosts clashed

together. Phanes, the traitor, had left his children in Egypt, when he fled to the Persian. The Greek mercenaries placed a great bowl of wine midway between the armies, and bringing up to it the children of the man who had betrayed them, they cut their throats, one by one, over the bowl, and then drank the horrid draught of mingled wine and blood. Nothing worse was ever told of Assyrian cruelties, and the tale, if true, shows how much of the barbarian still lingered among civilized Greeks less than fifty years before Salamis.

This dreadful sacrament of blood once over, the two armies joined battle. One can imagine that the Greek *hoplites* fought as men who know that victory is their only hope ; but at last their brazen ranks were broken, and all was lost. There was no recovery for Egypt, and the whole country rapidly fell into the hands of the half-insane Persian king. But the story of his conquests and disasters, of his mad persecution of the Egyptian religion, and his miserable death, belongs not to the old world, but to the new one which was now arising upon the ruins of the old.

With the fall of Egypt at Pelusium, the tottering fabric of the world of the Ancient East crashed to the dust once and for all. When the dust had cleared, Persia, under Darius, stood forth as the representative of the New East, face to face with Greece, the champion of the New West ; and the next landmark in world-history is reached, thirty-five years after the battle of Pelusium, when Persian and Greek clash together on Greek soil, at MARATHON.

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